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# **Magison-ison: A parallel reality construction of war among Joloano Muslim Survivors in Sulu, Philippines**

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***Magison-ison: A Parallel Reality Construction  
of War among Joloano Muslim Survivors  
in Sulu, Philippines***

**A Dissertation submitted by**

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**to the**

**College of Mass Communication  
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## PREFACE MAGISON

Universal wars create a void amidst angst and sufferings articulated in various contexts. True enough conflicts are viewed from different frames. And the **Mindanao war** is not an exemption as this conflict is often seen from two major standpoints, from that of a Filipino Christian or a Filipino Muslim. Confronted by such a predicament however, people from all walks of life albeit ethnicity, regional orientation, beliefs and government will speak the same language. A language of the soul bound by a common ground and embroiled by realities only war survivors can decipher. Thus my reality of the 1974 hostilities in Jolo is no different from that of a war survivor from Egypt, Libya, Afghanistan, Pakistan and even Vietnam in the 1950's.

From a constructionist perspective, I collected meaningful interpretations of the event in the course of “deconstructing” and “reconstructing” the Joloanos’ multiple war realities. The lens from which I saw the “conflict” in my hometown were jaded by my own personal judgement. Similarly my co-survivors have their psychological traumas and norms prompted by their own (subjective and objective) realities that made them see the conflict for what it was. Coming from the two dominant views, I applied a self-reflexive strategy to look into “our” war realities and the role of communication in the Mindanao conflict. This has given me leeway to uncover layers of truths about the 1974 siege in Jolo, Sulu as I and my co-authors across age have experienced in the wake of the Marcos’ Martial Law era.

**Magison-ison** in the Tausog dialect evokes of a casual yet pleasant conversation the local folks are commonly engage in while at the “tabu” (marketplace) and in the “kaddai” (cofeeshop) to slowly occupy time. The term speaks of the methodology applied in the study. It is suggestive

of a poignant heart-warming ambiance spawned among the Joloanos while they converge in a dialogue. The simplicity of this occasion transcends all realities of the **Mindanao war** as Filipino Christians and Muslims connect in a breathtaking sense of oneness even just for a spell.

## ABSTRACT

The [Mindanao conflict](#) in Southern Philippines is a long-standing controversy that has eluded comprehensive solutions. Despite efforts of the Government of the Philippines (GRP) and the representatives from the peoples of Mindanao in undertaking peace initiatives, “the war:” continues.

The establishment of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) as embodied in an organic law provided in the 1986 Philippine Constitution has not seemed to bring about the much-anticipated progress. Even with the so-called “autonomy” already in place to substantiate the clamor of the Muslims for self-rule in the Tripoli Agreement, conflict has escalated signifying unrest among the people.

Instead of dealing with the problem from the standpoint of an “outsider” who may know about the [Mindanao conflict](#) from what they hear, the study attempted to get a glimpse of “the war” from the “insiders” who have survived and lived to tell their own stories. From the perspectives of two distinct peoples of Sulu- the Christian and Muslim Joloanos, the study was able to penetrate the heart of conflict in Mindanao.

The study was able to visualize “the 1974 war” and the on-going conflicts from two cultural lenses and in the process was able to demonstrate a “parallel reality construction” among the war survivors who provided interesting insights of “the war” from their “fantasy themes”.

The [research](#) has not only surfaced conflicting notions in their revelations of “the war” as experienced (subjective realities) but has generated elements of “convergence” as their experiences were correlated with the institutionalized beliefs of war (objective realities) or the

war as told. Despite distinct subjective realities, they have shown proclivity towards parallel perceptions.

The Joloano war survivors' subjective realities as applied in the study include their psycho-social trauma of the war and their portrayal of the role of "the other" culture as co-survivors of war. Among the elderly, descriptions of their fears and negative emotions have strongly echoed "old prejudices". Among the middle-aged, "prudence" and tact in their narratives revealed a tendency to rationalize and to show sympathy towards "the other" culture. From the young war survivors a propensity towards confronting their dilemma suggested optimism and resilience in their perceptions.

Transitions in the subjective realities of the war survivors are apparent across culture and age. Opposing views are very strong among the elderly except for one Christian and a Muslim who are associated with "the other" culture by reason of marriage with them. The older Christian Joloanos for instance believe that the war was "unnecessary" while the older Muslims were convinced it was "inevitable". The study has strongly shown that "shifts" in perceptions could be anchored on the participants' religious beliefs and changing circumstances that come with age, political set-up, economic climate and inter-marriage among others.

Their reactions towards the prevailing issues of war (media war issues, other concepts and beliefs of war) which constitute the institutionalized-objective realities as defined in the study are "convergent" despite distinct experiences and personal circumstances. They have for example generally shown disagreement towards the commonly held concept that the mass media function to crystallize relevant issues, like the [war](#) in Mindanao. The majority of the co-authors furthermore negated the belief of the general public that "Christians and Muslims can

never co-exist peacefully, and that the 1974 war was a form of “jihad” or a religious war among Muslims.

In the study therefore, communication has been proven once again to play a vital role in clarifying issues of the [Mindanao conflict](#). It performed an *emancipatory role* in ways that provided rhetorical and psychological relief by allowing an occasion for war survivors to *deconstruct* their realities through their narratives. And to *reconstruct* their meaning of *war* by actively taking part in correcting prevailing notions of war to bring about the much needed change in a war-torn community like Sulu.



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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

*Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men where the defenses for peace must be reconstructed.*

UNESCO

### **I. Background of the Study**

#### *Looking at Global Wars from a Constructionist Perspective*

The terrors of war in different countries of the world have only brought about one thing in common- despair. And from these man-made catastrophe, universally constructed meanings of “war” came about to continuously perpetuate waves of hatred and violence among nations through generations.

The Apartheid in South Africa is a classic example of war between the English colonizers and the Dutch descendants (Boers and Afrikaners) against preferential treatment. The Apartheid laws in 1946 institutionalized racial discrimination that touched every aspect of the African’s social life from prohibition of marriage between non-whites and whites and the sanctioning of “white only jobs” in 1950. The passage of the Public Safety Act and the Criminal Law Amendment further legitimized racial oppression that led to massive protests and the killing of several Negroes in 1960. The ethical questions that were raised centered on colonial racism and imperialism. These concepts have been sustained because socially constructed meanings legitimized and strengthened acts of racial discrimination (Robinson, n.d.).

The Jacobite war of the 18<sup>th</sup> century took place during the restoration period in Modern Ireland when the country was denominationally divided between the Protestant

loyalists and the Roman Catholics. The religious dimension was very strong from the conflict when Protestant ascendancy dominated in proportion to the population and ownership of the land by the Protestant Episcopal church. The Catholic majority was excluded from political rights by the Test Act of 1704 which made tenure of office dependent on the willingness to receive communion from the Protestant Episcopal (church of Ireland) rites. Refusal of the Catholics to do so meant exile and banishment from public life (Mills, 2005).

The Israeli-Palestinian war is another kind of conflict that suggests a struggle for territorial rights and jurisdiction. The Israelis as the “haves” in this fight and the Palestinians as the “have nots” would seem to show disparity in the tug-of-war of opponents. Nevertheless the Oslo Declaration of Peace (DOP) was initiated as a regional peace initiative that provided the principles that laid down the foundation for self-government and the transfer of land to the Palestinians as part of the peace process. The DOP was criticized as having failed for the following reasons: from the Palestinians' stance, the transfer of land was erratically implemented and did not give them justice and dignity; from the Israelis' opinion, the peace accord did not bring security and put an end to acts of terrorism against them and finally from the onlookers' views the economic and social underpinnings of peace in the DOP were mere slogans of good intentions. As a result the peace process did little to close the gap. The resulting stalemate has led to low intensity conflicts going on in the area. And the struggle for power and influence from two sides has continued (Center for Strategic and International Studies, n.d.).

These series of wars from a constructionist perspective have acquired negative representations through the years. And communication somehow played a crucial role in bringing about changes by deconstructing the faces of racism, religious differences, terrorism and struggle for power that brought about the "wars" with counter meanings that evoked positive images.

For instance, attempts to discourage Apartheid and the stereotypes involving racism became a worldwide mission after the repeal of the Apartheid law several years back. The logo or the slogan "black is beautiful" has been included in campaigns, advertisements, and commercial product endorsements to erase the notion that black is ugly, evil and dirty.

The present times therefore urgently call for constructively changing negative symbols and images institutionalized by global wars. Today, no less than the Vatican, the seat of Roman Catholicism advocates mutual respect in order to bring about peaceful co-existence among peoples of different religions and cultures. Thus, the definition of war in different parts of the world can be reconstructed. And with the advent of technology, communication should once again take the front seat in neutralizing social prejudices and misconceptions built by global wars.



### *Reconstructing the Mindanao Conflict at the Grassroots*

In southern Philippines the war survivors would be the best living testimony to articulate what the war means to them.

Hence, the present study endeavored to comprehend its essence in a community of mixed cultures like Jolo by allowing the *Muslim* and the *Christian* stakeholders (categorized by religious affiliation) to *co-author* their own stories. They were made to articulate their fears, hopes and dreams as war survivors in a series of *fantasy themes* that projected critical insights of their past and present realities.

The 1974 war in Sulu has mirrored unique realities for the Muslim and Christian Joloano war survivors. These realities were based on their respective “truths” shaped over time by history and distinct culture. And whatever transitions their realities may have undergone were reflected in their rhetorical accounts of war and socially constructed by them as survivors. Essentially, the study was able to establish the possibility of a *parallel reality construction* between two distinct cultures appraising similar events from their own lenses. The study further examined how *convergence* and/or *divergence* in their perceptions surfaced from their narratives as they revealed their *subjective realities* on the one hand (the psychological impact of war and their perceptions of the role of “the other culture” as co-survivors of war) and on the other, as they correlated their subjective realities with the prevailing *objective realities* (institutionalized issues and beliefs of war) affecting both cultures.

In essence, the study is a *critical ethnography* that went beyond descriptions. It rendered value statements of oppressive structures and situations operating in a war community and how they immensely determined the present state of reality among war

survivors. The study offered an alternative to counter such repression by enabling the Muslim and Christian war survivors to *deconstruct* and *reconstruct* their realities through a participatory mode of dialogic discourse called *Magison-ison*. In the process, it allowed them a *parallel* transmission of realities that has been facilitative and liberating for both cultures.

The present work in effect examined how two dominant cultures have come together to *re-articulate* their realities after years of exposure to war- the bond that inevitably binds them being their common experiences of the upheaval. The narratives of the Joloanos have certainly demonstrated the importance of *dialogue* in unraveling multiple realities of war. Communication has once again proven its fundamental role in facilitating meanings. It inspired dynamic exchange of ideas and clarified notions that have widened the so-called *psychological divide* between the southern and northern Filipinos. The study has shown that *stereotypes* brought about by century-old misunderstandings can be deconstructed lest they become institutions that would poison the new generation's hope for a better alliance between the Muslim and Christian Filipinos.

The lessons learned from the study are expected to pave the way for a more cohesive participation by the stakeholders and the outside communities in the *peace-building* efforts in Mindanao.

## **II. Significance of the Study**

From a micro perspective, I sought an in-depth appreciation of what goes behind the “conflict in Mindanao” convinced that the findings taken at the grassroots

can provide a better analysis of the volatile situation prevailing in conflict communities at the macro level.

I appraised the war scenario from the standpoint of two dominant cultures- the Christian and the Muslim Joloanos of Sulu by applying a self-reflexive mode of inquiry called Magison-ison. From two parallel sides, I compared and contrasted raw experiences coming from the war survivors themselves. As key players who have relentlessly suffered from combat, their respective accounts as co-authors remarkably hinted on how they see themselves clearly in relation to “the other” victims. Convergence is strongly revealed in their perceptions. As a critical ethnography, the research moreover uncovered structures both cultures identified and described as oppressively operating in their midst. In effect, the study yielded fresh and relevant materials in its treatment of the Mindanao problem when considered from different perspectives. This research has certainly contributed to the limited literature existing on the Mindanao conflict.

On a personal level, I consider the study self-enriching being a Tausog by birth and having spent my childhood imbued with the nuances in the community. The 1974 war in Sulu that ensued after the declaration of Martial Law made an enduring impression upon me thereby inspiring me to pursue this task. Furthermore, being a product of “convergence” by virtue of an inter-cultural marriage between a Christian mother and a Muslim father, I felt privileged to have provided the “link” between the two cultures in the study. It somehow provided some members of my community with an enlightened belief that beyond cultural disparity a desire for peace can prevail.

### **III. Scope and Delimitation of the Study**

I have focused on the local residents of the municipality of Jolo, province of Sulu in Region IX. The participants were Christian and Muslim Joloanos who have witnessed the war and its consequences in the locality.

Since this research is essentially qualitative, it consumed much time involving several cluster groupings. At the outset, I concentrated only on three most populated barangays in Jolo where Christians and Muslims thrive- Busbus, Asturias and San Raymundo.

Sporadic conflicts in the area have caused several delays in the gathering of participants unexpectedly extending my fieldwork from its initial schedule of six months to eight months. The translations I have undertaken of the narratives and discussions from the Focus Interviews (FIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) from English to Taosug and vice-versa also added to the delay since local meanings and expressions have to be confirmed with the participants.

My work being qualitative in design certainly has limitations in terms of generalizability. What it presented only constituted a portion of the total picture that comprised the existing Mindanao crisis. In other words the study may not have proposed statements conclusive by themselves but it nevertheless have provided insightful revelations grounded on the prevailing perceptions of the Joloanos in a conflict community.

### **IV. Problem and Objectives**

#### **A. Problem**

Considering the multiple realities the general public may have regarding the on-going conflict in Mindanao the study examined the prevailing consciousness of the Christian and the Muslim Joloano war survivors of Sulu as two distinct peoples. In a nutshell, the study focused on the research question: *What role did communication play in facilitating convergent meanings of war among peoples of different culture?* The problem was specifically broken down as follows:

1. What socially constructed realities of war have prevailed among the Christian and Muslim Joloano war survivors of Sulu?
2. How was a constructionist communication approach able to elaborate on the possibility of a parallel reality construction of war in a community of mixed culture like Jolo?

## **B. Objectives**

The general objectives of the research were:

1. To disclose the socially constructed realities of war prevailing in Sulu among the Christian and the Muslim Joloano war survivors; and
2. To elaborate on the possibility of a parallel reality construction of war among the Christian and Muslim Joloano war survivors through a dialogic discourse called Magison-ison.

Specifically the study aimed:

1. To surface the socially constructed realities of war among the Christians and the Muslim Joloano war survivors classified according to:
  - a. the early encounters
  - b. the 1974 war
  - c. post conflict Jolo
2. To elaborate on the possibility of a parallel reality construction of war among the Christian and the Muslim Joloano war survivors by:
  - a. examining their subjective realities:
    - a.1 the psycho-social impact of war and
    - a.2 the portrayal of roles of “the other” culture as co-survivors of war

b. generating their objective realities as war survivors on the following issues:

b.1 shared institutional realities

b.1.1 media war issues in Mindanao

b.1.2 other concepts of war in Mindanao

b.2 culture-bound realities

b.2.1 the belief of a religious war in Mindanao

b.2.2 conciliation and the Mindanao peace process

c. exploring the possibility of convergence and/or divergence in the constructed realities of the Joloano war survivors from a constructionist communication perspective particularly:

c.1 correlating their subjective and objective realities;

c.2 presenting a parallel view of their constructed realities; and

c.3 appraising motives behind the polarity and/or convergence in their realities.

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

*In our search of commonalities we should focus not on the clash of civilizations rather we should promote the fusion of civilizations... It is only when we subscribe to this tenet that we can begin to build universal values of trust, faith, harmony and cooperation...*

Florangel Rosario Braid

#### I. On Issues of the Mindanao Conflict

The study found it essential to look into some “hard facts” about the stories of war in Mindanao that would constitute reality from the point of view of noted experts in their fields. In the process, these facts were interrelated with the first-hand accounts of the war taken from the battleground.

##### *The Socio-Economic Aspects of the War*

Samuel K. Tan (1995) of the University of the Philippines Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP-CIDS) saw the conflict in Mindanao as endemic and multi-dimensional. “*To understand Moro secessionism, not only the political and the cultural aspects of the struggle must be examined, but also the socio-economic dimensions in historical and contemporary perspective,*” he underscored (2).

In a special publication entitled: *The Socio-economic dimension of Moro Secessionism*, Tan (1995) highlighted the following: **First**, demography or the massive in-migration of Christian population to southern Philippines encouraged by colonial policies triggered socio-economic imbalance particularly during the last half of the



American regime. Thus even the division of the provinces for administrative purposes was governed by Christian non-Christian dichotomy. **Second**, there is inequitable distribution of resources influenced by colonial powers that favored the Christian sectors. Even land ownership through legal instruments contradicted the local tradition that recognizes collective ownership. In effect several non-Christians were deprived of their ancestral lands either because of ignorance or cost of having their real property titled. **Third** is the investment pattern for Mindanao economic development that favored foreigners and local elites. Most of these businesses were engaged in logging concessions, food production or processing, coconut and corporate farms. Profits were enjoyed by capitalists while the Mindanao people's participation centered largely on labor and management. **Fourth** is religious polarization in nationalism that triggered division of Filipino nation along religious orientation into Christians and Muslims. Tan therefore emphasized that while Muslims and Christians share certain universal principles, such commonality was not sufficient to bring the two religions to a common objective partly owing to historical misfortunes, mutual prejudices and enmity that marked the entries of Islam and Christianity into the archipelago. Consequently, the idea of nationhood followed a *parallel* rather than a concentric line of development.

The emergence of the **Bangsamoro** as a secular concept furthermore according to Tan was an attempt of the Muslims to harmonize various aspirations of groups in Mindanao. It became “a term of compromise by way of accommodating all Muslims and Christians who consider Mindanao, Sulu, Tawi-tawi, Palawan and Basilan their homeland” (Tan, 1995: 19). He believes that unless existing conditions in local governance and land distribution are radically altered secessionism continues. He

therefore calls for urgent measures to correct the situation through: *decentralization* of responsibility and not authority from the central to local government; *decolonization* or values reorientation to eliminate cultural prejudices; and *distribution* or sharing of power and resources in an ethnically pluralistic Mindanao (22-25).

From the narratives and discussions of the Joloano war survivors in the research, strong economic implications have surfaced. Cases of land grabbing incidents especially in the upland and monopoly of the local industry depriving the poor of their livelihood were cited. These social injustices they believe have aggravated poverty and dichotomy between the northern and southern Filipinos since most of the wealthy capitalist come from Luzon. A number of those occupying position in the central government and the military have allegedly exploited the marginalized and instigated unrest in conflict areas.

Gutierrez et al. (1997) authored an actual account of the 1974 war in Sulu published in a book entitled ***Rebels, Warriors and Ulama***. A comprehensive presentation and analysis of the sequence of events, the characters, and other issues relevant to the war were found in the literature. The socio-economic factors of the continuing conflict as Tan has suggested were present from this account. The material has enriched the findings of the study giving it more substance and significance.

In a related study on Christian-Muslim relations in the Philippines, Gomez (2000) published a dissertation entitled ***The Moro Rebellion and the Search for Peace***. He presented transitions in the relations between these two cultures describing in detail the historical past and how it contributed to the so-called “cultural bifurcation” and the on-going war. The study likewise discussed socio-economic factors that fueled the rift.

Political power play among the Muslims he claimed has immensely aggravated non-stop feuding. He is nevertheless convinced that with enough initiative equally coming from the Christian and Muslim camps a better relationship is plausible given attempts at reconciliation in the past. McKenna (1992) wrote of “cultural hegemony” that naturally characterized the hierarchical and clannish structure of a Muslim society in his book entitled *Martial Law, Moro Nationalism and Traditional Leadership in Cotabato*. He stressed that among the Muslims a tendency to dominate and monopolize is prevalent creating an occasion for oppression to take place even among their people. This tradition he believes has intensified the concept of warring among the Muslims.

#### *State Initiatives on War Programs*

The government’s projection of a decade development plan for Mindanao since Ferdinand Marcos had been impressive but confined only to “official reports” claimed Tan (1995). An examination of the implementation of the Southern Philippine Development Authority (SPDA) in the autonomous region to bring about socio-economic development pointed to graft and corruption as the root cause of project failure in the region. *“The projects had been duly approved by the NEDA and allocated appropriations. But how much really went into developments...remained an important issue of historical investigation...”* (14). He saw this problem as endemic of the country’s colonial past. In effect, he clarified the benefits were not seen by the people in concrete terms and had been largely confined in plans and official reports.

On a similar note, Abubakar (2000) commented that “the SPCPD and the economic development in the SZOPAD (generated) high expectations but low output”

(125). As the implementing agency of the ARMM during its three-year transitory period such assessment of its performance was not very encouraging.

The failure of most of the basic services and infrastructure facilities initiated by the Southern Philippines Council for Peace and Development (SPCPD) in depressed areas Abubakar observed can be attributed to the following: SPCPD's limited power and authority, budgetary constraints, lack of coordination and cooperation from line agencies, changing priorities of national leaders and questionable leadership style in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). Even with the implementation of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) multi-donor assistance program in partnership with the SPCPD and National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) in terms of livelihood and employment, education and social services, the Special Zone of Peace and Development (SZOPAD) has not shown the extent of improvements anticipated. Among the probable reasons mentioned were lack of sufficient time for full project implementation; recipients' lack of knowledge of the nature of cooperative since most livelihood projects were cooperative-based; lack of sustainability of the projects since the government did not have the budget to support and the fact that very small portion of the MNLF sector was benefited. Only 30% of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) in the community has been reportedly served by United Nations (UN) programs (Abubakar, 2000: 135-149).

Now, with the full implementation of the ARMM, problems have accumulated making its functions seem redundant and meaningless. "Most resolutions coming from the Consultative Assembly of the ARMM were in actuality hardly approved by the national government and budgetary constraints hampered intensive developments in the

SZOPAD,” stressed Abubakar (2000: 139). This reality has contributed to the dilemma of the war survivors in war-torn communities. They have expressed their varied sentiments as key informants in the study generally showing grave disappointment with how things are going in the ARMM.

### *The Role of Communication in Conflict and Societal Development*

In a transitional society, Pye (1966) wrote that the communication system is “bifurcated” and “fragmented” for it involves in varying degrees one system which is based upon modern technology, is urban-centered and reaches the more urbanized segments of the population (159). On the other end it is also a separate complex system which conforms in varying degrees to traditional systems like face-to-face communication and tends to follow the pattern of communal life. These two systems are not integrated but are more or less autonomous. There is no systematic linkage as to who plays the role of transmitting and interpreting information to the local community. In other words there is fundamental division between the urban and the elite level and the village or mass level. And there is further fragmentation in terms of isolated sub-systems.

The above illustration closely resembles the communication system in the Philippines where news sources and information dissemination are Manila-centered. This arrangement has for long created a sense of isolation and detachment of the provinces and far-flung communities from the national center in Manila. “The pattern is like the spokes of a wheel all connecting to a hub but without outer rim that connects any of the spokes” explained Pye (1966: 160).

In his book entitled *Aspects of Political Development*, communication is seen as an essential component of political development. Pye visualized an important role of communication in a transitional society by increasing the penetration of the mass media in all the separate communal dimension of the nations. At the same time he pointed out the need for the informal systems to develop the capacity to interact with the mass-media system benefiting from the greater flow of communication while maintaining a sense of community among their participation.

Thus, in a transitional country like the Philippines, there has always been the problem of linking closely peoples of separate islands especially those in conflict communities. This has been the primary concern not only of the government but the communication networks. With strategic planning involving local-based media satellites, the provinces have been trying to work closely with national news centers. Observing ethics and professionalism in news reportage is another matter that is being studied by the media practitioners for them to truly reach out to practically all Filipinos especially those coming from remote areas. It is only through responsible reporting that communication can assist effectively in societal development without alienating the marginalized and peoples of distinct cultures.

The participation of the national and the local media in societal development as earlier suggested by Pye is certainly crucial. Penetration of the mass media in all levels of the society especially in conflict communities would however entail more than mere information dissemination or confrontation, its goal being to encourage involvement from the people. In a book entitled *The Media and Peace Reporting*, selected articles of prominent writers featured the Mindanao conflict and peace reportage. Published by

the Office of the President for Peace Process (OPPP) and the Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility (CMFR), the book in essence upheld responsible reporting to boost community involvement in the peace negotiations in southern Philippines. A *Manual on Peace Reporting in Mindanao* is another piece of literature written by Maslog (1990) that advocated ethical considerations in journalism. He discouraged provocative news promoting cultural biases and stereotypes. Reporting, he stressed should be constructive and focused on development especially in conflict communities with the ultimate aim of motivating grassroots participation regardless of the people's creed or region.

Similarly, Braid (2002) described communication as a “bridge” essential to close the gap between diverse peoples in a pluralistic society. In a book she edited entitled *Muslim and Christian Cultures: In search of Commonalities*, distinguished authors presented series of papers highlighting spectrum of convergence between the two cultures in the areas of family, community, role of women, religion, education, political and sustainable development. The notion of communication based on authentic dialogue is what Braid emphasized as the key toward a real sense of oneness in the face of diversity.

## **II. Empowering Tools in Reflexive Methodology**

The present work relied on a self-reflexive mode of inquiry. It also gave importance to the role of the researcher as a stakeholder and a facilitator in connecting the co-authors as they constructed their realities of war. In other words the study took the form of “an \_expression of love for and a commitment (of the researcher) to

ordinary people living unique lives in communities they consider their own” (Alfonso, 2001: 3).

Reinforcing Krippendorff's theory of Emancipatory Communication, Alfonso emphasized the self-reflexive process of “knowing thyself.” The study applied the process as a tool for empowering two distinct peoples. Underscoring the need for the community's direct participation in research, citing V. Burr (1995), Alfonso elaborated on self-reflexivity to fully explain the concept of a socially shared inquiry.

Self-reflexivity in SSI according to Alfonso (2001) would mean ordinary people turning inward to study themselves concretely as real people with human face, by engaging in narratives of “self-reflexivity,” that is telling themselves stories about themselves as embedded individuals in the context of the whole constellation of diverse backgrounds. Furthermore, the people as their own re-searchers would stipulate their own purpose. They are autonomous. If they fail to do so somebody will determine a purpose for them.

In the same vein Portus (1999), in employing participant-observation and interview as a reflexive mode of eliciting information in her study, examined the negotiating powers of women in prostitution giving a down-to-earth account of the communication that takes place between these exploited women vis-à-vis the other key players in the community. Diaz (2000) likewise initiated a reflexive technique in evoking real-life stories of ordinary women from which textual analyses through *semantic webbing* were undertaken.

In another study, the role of communication in *deconstructing* and *reconstructing* realities about the never married women has been explored through a



self-reflexive methodology. Pasumbal (2000) was able to demonstrate the possibility of a counter-reconstruction of images that *empowered* the never married women.

An ethnographic study on the emerging cultural beliefs and practices of the Ibanag further utilized a reflexive inquiry in understanding transitions in their values in the fast changing communication environment. Cureg (2004) in closely examining the changing and vanishing traditions in the community relied essentially on the community member's reflexive participation.

Pasumbal (2000) discussed the concept of reflexive elaboration and it was furthermore employed throughout data collection. The researcher's series of relative interpretation of the phenomenon (through readings of related literature and personal experience of the war) were presented for joint inspection of the participants (Christian and Muslim co-authors) to expand their own understanding of the war.

### **III. Synthesis**

Tan's insights of the socio-economic factors affecting the Mindanao conflict mostly surfaced from the discussions enriching the raw data taken from the FGDs. Mass in-migration of the early Christian settlers in Sulu was evident from the background of most of the elderly key informants who were born in Jolo. This suggested long periods of co-existence with the native Joloanos which was generally described as pleasant by majority of the co-authors. There have always been causes for competition between the two cultures mainly in terms of political and economic ventures but as implied from the narratives livelihood and food that time were not as scarce as today. From a number of socio-economic reasons Tan cited one palpable root

of the on-going conflict in Mindanao being “poverty” of the people in conflict areas. This accordingly has aggravated the affliction of the people coupled with the failure of government agencies like the ARMM in actualizing its role of overseeing development in the SZOPAD areas as earlier mentioned by Abubakar.

There is always hope in search for a better Mindanao and a more positive coalition between Filipino Muslims and Christians. Gomez in his study underscored this fact that as peoples of one nation there is always that desire among the Filipinos to unite in times of crisis. He cited for instance that period in history wherein Muslims and Christians fought hand in hand to resist Japanese imperialism and to succeed later in achieving independence from the American rule.

The mass media as an institution should take the responsibility of bridging the gap between peoples divided by region, creed, and tradition Braid emphasized. And in a transitional and a fragmented society like the Philippines, the crucial role of communication in political development as Pye stressed is essential to prevent further disintegration of urban and rural communities. He strongly advocated penetration of the mass media in all segments of the society.

## CHAPTER THREE

### STUDY FRAMEWORK

*The world with which we are concerned is false, i.e., is not fact but fable, an approximation on the basis of a meager sum of observations; it is “in flux,” as something in a state of becoming, as a falsehood, always changing but never getting near the truth: for there is no TRUTH...*

Friedrich Nietzsche

#### I. Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on this radical and rather stark opening quotation of Nietzsche whose concept of “truth” erases all rigid notions of “fixed reality” in describing the social world.

Essentially inspired by the theories of Social Construction of Reality and Emancipatory Communication used earlier in the works of Pasumbal (2000) on constructing counter-realities and Cureg (2004) in de-institutionalizing structured realities, the study interpreted reality construction from a context that is equally enabling. It explored the possibility of “converging diverse realities” through reflexive communication to see how two distinct and interacting cultures “trapped” under the same social circumstances would analyze their present reality amidst conflict. The study furthermore examined how a “given reality” can possibly be “reconstructed” by them to fit into a certain “truth” liberating for both cultures.

## **A. The Social Construction of Reality Theory**

From a constructionist stance, the reality of the social world is characterized briefly as follows:

*Society is human product. Society is an objective reality. Man is a social product. (Stated otherwise) man's self-production is always and of necessity a social enterprise because men together produce a human environment with the totality of its socio-cultural and psychological formation..."* (Berger & Luckmann, 1966: 59-61).

Thus, the paradox of man being capable of producing his world (not in isolation but in collectivities) and at the same time experiencing it, points to a dialectic relationship between man as a producer and the society as the product and vice versa.

Berger and Luckmann (1966) recognized this dialectic relation between man and society as central to the very essence of constructing reality. It comprised the heart of the argument they presented in the Social Construction of Reality Theory (SCRT), which sees human reality as "collectively constructed."

The reality that is socially produced however is said to be based on a "truth" that is constantly "in flux" as Nietzsche emphatically claims in the opening quotation. For truth as Gergen (1994), a constructionist and socio-psychologist similarly puts it, "is historically and culturally specific" thus making all reality a falsehood, transitory, and always changing. Burr (1997) in a

paper entitled *Social Constructionism and Psychology* published in *The New Psychologist* clarifies this point further as she remarked:

*Since people are the products of social processes and conditions that are constantly changing throughout history then human beings are constantly changing too. The reality they produced (then) becomes dependent upon the historical and cultural conditions they inhabit (2).*

Reality therefore reflects on people's varying experiences of the world and the social forces affecting them. The way they think and construct their reality depend on when and where in the world they happen to live.

In the same vein, reality is described by Mehan and Wood (1975) as socially transformable:

*Realities are reflexive, coherent, interactional, fragile, and permeable... Reality depends upon ceaseless reflexive use of a coherent body of knowledge in interaction. However every reality is also fragile. And because the reflexive use of social knowledge is fragile and interaction dependent, one reality may be altered and given the right conditions, it is possible to move from one reality to another.*

This line of thought provided a welcome relief for other disciplines that adapted the subjective-constructionist stance as opposed to the objective rigidity of the scientific empiricist approach. Such development however triggered quite a controversy especially in the field of social psychology as it raised the question of "dichotomy" between *the self* and *the social* in constructing reality. This brought forth the argument that since truth is relative and reality differs from the individual and societal standpoint "there can be no truth about people and we search for it in vain" (Burr, 1997: 3). This implied that traditional

psychology was doomed to failure as many scholars have suggested because of the contradictions that social constructionism seemed to have posed.

Social constructionism has indeed immensely broadened our perceptions of reality that is “construed, fashioned and organized by human beings in their efforts to make sense of the world” (Sarbin & Kituse, 1993: 3). And this includes making sense of realities unique to a culture- symbols, rituals, beliefs and practices that acquire shared meanings through reflexive human interaction. An interaction manifested through a “kind of involvement in which community members come to construct each other as belonging to the same whole” (Alfonso, 2001: 29).

Social Construction of Reality Theory (SCRT) is described by Berger and Luckmann (1966) as a long and continuous process involving stages in succession. It is believed to commence as soon as the process of habituation occurs. And this happens when an action is repeated frequently creating a pattern of doing things.

Reality construction therefore begins when a human activity becomes a subject of habituation. It is gradually repeated and cast into a pattern. The frequency of the act ripens into a routine repeated some time in the future, in the same manner and the same economical effort. This is true of a social and non-social activity. For instance, a solitary individual would at times even notice himself caught in a routine saying, “*there I go again...*” This habitualized action then acquires meaning subsuming other similar situations under such predefinition.

In describing the next step which is “perfecting” institutionalization, Berger and Luckmann (1966) states:

*Reciprocal typification of habitualized action occurs [sic] only in collectivities containing considerable numbers of people. For then and only then can typology of action be manifested... activities indulged in by two individuals when passed on to others would make the process of institutionalization perfected.*

The “crystallization” of the said institution further takes place through transmission of new knowledge over and beyond the individuals who initiated it by social interaction. Thus, Berger and Luckmann claimed, “the institutions are now experiences as possessing a reality of their own, a reality that confronts the individual as an external and coercive fact.”

Hence, through the process of transmission the institutional world “thickens” and “hardens” not only for the children by “mirror effect” for the parents as well. And so, at this stage we hear “this is how things are done” often spoken. But since the children have no part in shaping it, it confronts them as a given reality- unalterable and self-evident. At this point, “firmness in consciousness” is attained by the transmitter of the knowledge and the receiving generation such that it can no longer be changed so readily.

Institutions furthermore are not created instantaneously. They imply historicity and control having built up in the course of shared history through reciprocal typification. Hence it is important not only to understand its history but the control intrinsic in it. The very existence of an institution carries with it “primary control” further reinforced by other forms of moral and social sanctions considered secondary. They effectively ensure justification,

legitimacy and preservation of an institution that is not easily possible with human memory.

Objectivation takes place thereafter once there is transmission to the next generation securing the continuity of the institution. Thus, Berger and Luckmann (1966) stressed in their book entitled *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, that indeed, the institution is experienced as an “objective-external” reality with a history that “antedates the individual’s birth,” meaning “it was there before he was born, and will be there after his death” (51-55).

It is imperative to emphasize at this juncture that the ‘objectivity’ of the institutional order no matter how ‘massive’ it appears to an individual would always be transitory. Institutionalization thus should not be taken as an irreversible process, despite the fact that institutions once formed have a tendency to persist. For variety of historical reasons Pasumbal (2000) stressed, the scope of individualized action diminishes and de-institutionalization may take place in some areas of social life (76).

Reinforcing this concept, Cureg (2004) in her study commented:

*This line of thought gives hope for the nightmarish effect of the tradition of the dead generation on the brains of the living; losing their viability in the face of the present situation and condition emancipation from habitualized, institutionalized, objectivated, legitimized body of knowledge may be sought by the new generation (54).*



In the end, SCRT points back to the transitory nature of truth as the basis of reality. It is the kind of truth that Nietzsche emphatically referred to in the opening quotation as a *falsehood*. The concept of relativism thus supports SCRT's assumption that reality can evolve. It can be 'reconstructed' and 'de-institutionalized' to fit certain conditions. And so there can be as many realities formed as there are different versions of truth each finding meaning for some particular individuals at a given time and place.

For a constructionist therefore it would be more interesting to fathom *why* some realities are bestowed the status of *truth* while others are not. In the words of Burr (1997):

*What can be done is to assess viewpoints (realities) on the basis of its own merit-based on different representations of the world...that should include the criteria of how 'useful, facilitative or liberating' these representations are for the people affected by them.*

Hence the study took off from these assumptions. Through dialogic discourse the study examined war realities from the vantage point of two distinct cultures with a long history of polarity.

## **B. Emancipatory Communication Theory**

The idea of *de-institutionalizing* reality has been posited albeit implicitly by Berger and Luckmann in SCRT. They recognized the possibility of the institutions' "diminishing effect" as they become non-viable and man's capability as a collective entity to de-institutionalize the same to make them "more viable to their conditions." A self-reflexive and socially constructive

mode of interaction as proposed by Krippendorff (1991) in his Emancipatory Communication Theory (ECT) is therefore essential for the transformation to be emancipatory.

Applying such concept, the study explored on the process of *deconstruction* and *reconstruction* through an experiential search for truth whereby people were actively engaged in feeling, seeing, hearing and speaking their war realities. Indeed Krippendorff (1995) stressed reality construction should “not preclude human involvement like universal theories whose inherent imperialism discourages local understanding and diversity” (7).

However, the problem of being “trapped” in a given reality and belief system from one generation to another has time and again precluded people from the construction of their own truths. Because of the coercive social and psychological sanctions institutions imposed upon them they unwittingly yield instead of becoming actively involved in constructing their world. “Entrapment” is what Krippendorff called such a situation quoted as follows:

*The traditional notion of power does not provide individuals the means to breakaway from this entrapment. Instead the individuals are pushed further into the pitfall because they do not provide the individuals the chance to recognize the trap. Thus, even the non-viability of the part of the system is felt, individuals blindly conform to the system because they do not recognize the entrapment as such (Krippendorf, 1991).*

*Entrapment* thus may manifest itself through institutions (structures, systems of beliefs and practices) which have become non-viable and oppressive through time. Individuals are coerced into submitting because of their powerful hold on them. This “power” however is not as irreversible as it appears. And as

pointed out by Berger and Luckmann, it can be reconstructed and de-institutionalized in certain areas of social life.

Based on this assumption Pasumbal (2000) cited two alternative notions of power defined by Krippendorff as:

*One alternative notion is that power always resides in social relationships, not in individual or groups- but in society. For instance, it is not the power of the powerful that forces the powerless into compliance, but it is the compliance that invites power to emerge (58).*

*Another notion is that power does not reside in objective conditions outside social relationships but in reality constructions invented; talked about and complied with by those involved (59).*

Krippendorff offers these two alternative notions of power as options to liberate our minds from pre-structured beliefs of power using communication to deconstruct and reconstruct realities more viable to our conditions. Thus, he declares “for a linguistic assertion to do something, someone must let it participate meaningfully within his or her reality construction” (1991).

As Krippendorff (1995) earlier suggested participation pertains to human involvement that is both “socially constructive and reflexive” as opposed to some “universalizing theories that discourage local understanding and diversity.” And this means dialogical involvement that is participatory as well as critical. It is participatory in the sense that people of diverse culture and local circumstances actively take part in the “re-visions, re-articulations and languaging” of their realities. And “critical because they are encouraged not only to criticize but to propose alternatives in the process...” (101-132).

Gergen (1994) talks of dialogue and diversity in the same vein. Dialogue accordingly is imperative through “communicative relations in order to generate new orders of meaning from which new forms of action can emerge.” And that diversity in reality construction should be taken into account because of “the historical and cultural specificity of truth embodied in language constitutive of one or more traditions.”

All the above suppositions revolved around “communication as power” as Krippendorff (1991) proposed where dialogue and diversity come into play. And as earlier stressed by Gergen (1994) for communication to be emancipatory however, it should both be “reflexive and socially constructive.” Communication in the form of dialogues therefore should be taken to have dual perspectives: it should be individually expressed and socially formed. In other words, to be self-reflexive, reality should be reflective of the individual’s response (cognitive and affective) to a situation; and to be socially constructive, reality should be construed according to how the individual relates this reality to others. The former would refer to the individual’s subjective reality while the latter to his or her objective-external reality.

Notwithstanding SCRT’s notion of reality as a product of man’s collective effort and number of concepts have emerged especially in the field of social psychology offering varied perspectives. This helped in clarifying the long-standing controversy between the self and the social. For example, as earlier noted, Burr (1997) claimed that there really is only “false dichotomy” between man and society because man according to her is an integral part of the

fabric of the society he constructs. Such is the dialectic relation between man and society, where man is described both as the producer and the product of his reality. The study in effect examined how such paradox applied among war victims of diverse cultures while they dealt with their subjective as well as objective realities.

### **C. Symbolic Convergence Theory**

That reality is constructed as a social enterprise through communication that is self-reflexive and socially constructive finds full meaning in Symbolic Convergence Theory (SCT).

The theory is a rhetorical criticism that uses Bormann's fantasy theme analysis. Being both objective and interpretive in its approach as a communication theory, the study finds it useful in investigating the present phenomenon.

Bormann's (1992), SCT maintains that the sharing of group fantasies creates "symbolic convergence" suggesting a link between dramatic imagery members used when they talk to each other and the degree of group consciousness and solidarity. The assumption thus establishes a cause-and-effect hypothesis that holds true accordingly regardless of who the people are, where and why they meet.

The concept of "fantasy" here covers stories, jokes, metaphors and other imaginative language that interprets places and events that happened in the past or participated in the future. The process Bormann explains fulfills a psychological or rhetorical need as people engage in the creative and imaginative interpretation of events.

A story, Bormann suggested may spread out like "fire" catching the enthusiasm of others who share the imagery within the group thus, the term "fantasy chain reaction." While other stories fade, those that persisted move

beyond the small group context to become rhetorical visions shared by larger groups. These are stories reinforced through media messages and other traditional channels, which acquire new representations in the form of single word code, slogan, or non-verbal symbol.

In a similar argument, John Shotter, a communication expert explains how conversations (dialogues) have the potential of ‘bridging the gap’ and bringing people together. In his “Conversational Realities” a rhetorical-responsive version of social constructionism, Shotter describes how social constructionism becomes collaborative through dialogues. Dialogues he maintains are “collaborative” joint actions that create social bond generating a sense of belonging in people’s reality in the same manner that *shared fantasies* evoke among people a “sense of cohesion” as they relieve shared experiences. Shotter asserts that only when people are treated as proper participants in *co-authoring* their reality will they feel that the reality in which they live is “as much as theirs as anyone else’s” (Shotter, 1993).

On a broader perspective, using a cultural lens, Gergen (1994) likewise talks about “dialogues of culture” where people of diverse culture are made active participants in constructing their realities. It is essential to set in motion, he clarifies, the process of reflexive deliberation- to consider the historically and culturally situated character of the taken-for-granted world, to reflect on their potentials for suppression, to open space for other voices in the dialogues of culture and to connect dissimilarities.

Symbolic Convergence Theory as applied in the study does not demand accuracy of the facts behind the stories. Bormann (1994) like Shotter (1993) looks at the impact and response generated from the participants. It is predicted that with the “sharing of fantasies” cohesion follows at some point as people actively participate in “authoring” their reality.

The interpretive nature of Symbolic Convergence Theory is embodied in the fantasy theme analysis. The method examines values and motives behind the stories told and shared.

Hence, the study determined how convergence can be possible between two divergent and interacting cultures engaged in a dialogue meant to emancipate. And in the process observed how their subjective and objective realities based on their present “truth” can evolve into a reality they might consider “useful, facilitative and emancipatory” as emphasized by Burr (1997) in her earlier discussions.

## **II. Conceptual Framework**

In a unique context, the study applied the assumption of SCRT as it probed on the possibility of a “parallel” construction of reality between two divergent and co-existing cultures. Guided by ECT and Symbolic Convergence Theory, it further explored the essence of “convergence in diversity” as it examined how divergent cultures engaged in *deconstructing* and *reconstructing* their realities through emancipatory communication.



Modifying the frameworks of Tojos (1999) in breaking out from entrapment through social dialogic discourse; Pasumbal (2000) in her version of constructing counter-realities; and Cureg (2004) in her concept of de-institutionalizing non-viable beliefs and practices, the study with its notion of “converging diverse realities” evolved a framework involving the Muslim and Christian Joloanos of Sulu.

Grounded on the premise of cultural diversity the present work tried to comprehend how the Joloanos would construct and interpret their realities of war on the basis of their respective *truth* shaped over time by history and psycho-social factors.

In a community of mixed culture, the process of reality construction as presented Berger and Luckmann has taken on a new perspective. In the present study for example, two dominant cultures, the Muslims and the Christians of Jolo have been known to co-exist while having consistently adhered to their respective traditions, beliefs and practices. Through the years, they have continuously built, objectivated, legitimized and transmitted institutions. However their distinctiveness has precluded them from completely participating in the same reality construction. Thus, both cultures have continued to create, sustain and carry on respective belief system while partly sharing other structures as members of a community. The study in effect presupposes a *parallel* reality construction where two distinct and interacting cultures share in the creation and transmission of common institutions while maintaining traditions peculiar to each.

The process is illustrated in **Figure1** depicting two cultures represented by two continuously forward moving spirals traversing on a parallel direction and on the same time line. One spiral is illustrated with broken lines to suggest dissimilar realities. The

center where the two spirals meet indicates an area of *shared objective realities* where members of the community regardless of diversity are bound by common political, economic and social conditions. While the remaining areas in the periphery of each spiral symbolize beliefs and practices distinct to each culture which form part of their *culture-bound realities* exclusive of the other culture. Crucial to the study is to determine how both cultures distinct objective realities' have influenced their perceptions of the other, creating an impact on there social relations and their present realities of war in which they play significant part.

Figure 1. A Parallel Transmission of Belief System  
Among Mixed Cultures Through Socialization

### Social Construction of Reality

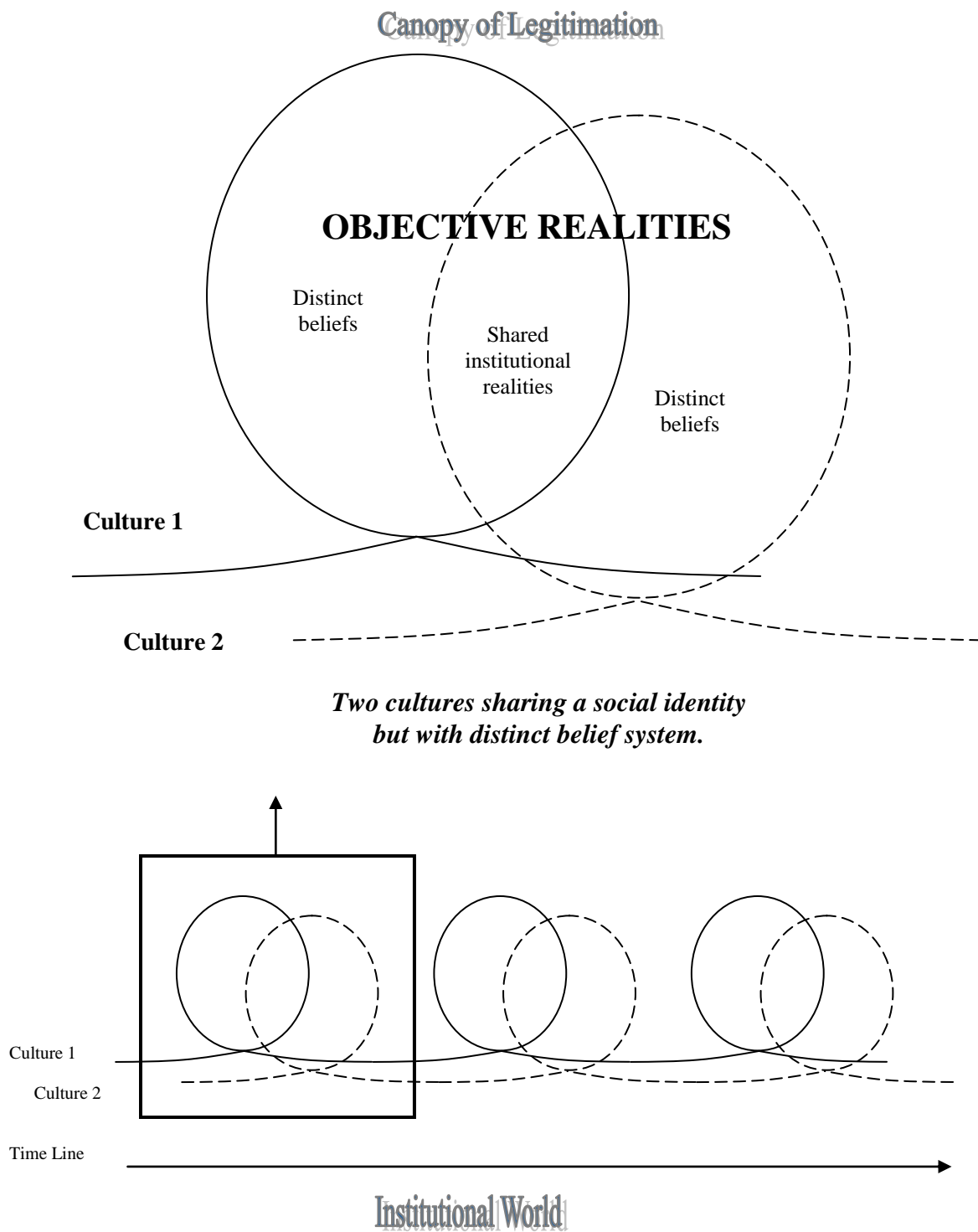


Figure 2. A Parallel Transmission of the Realities of War  
Among the Joloanos of Sulu

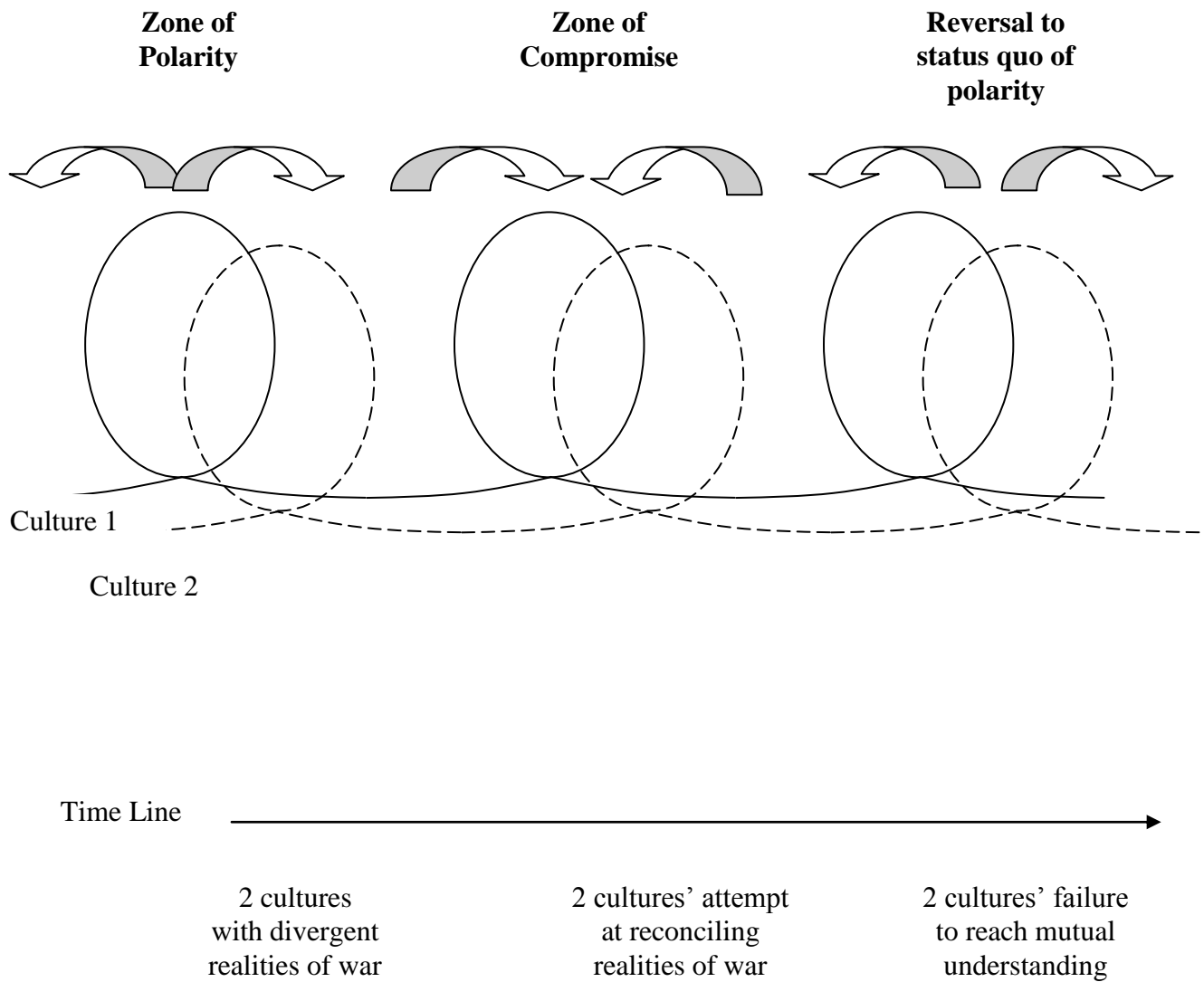
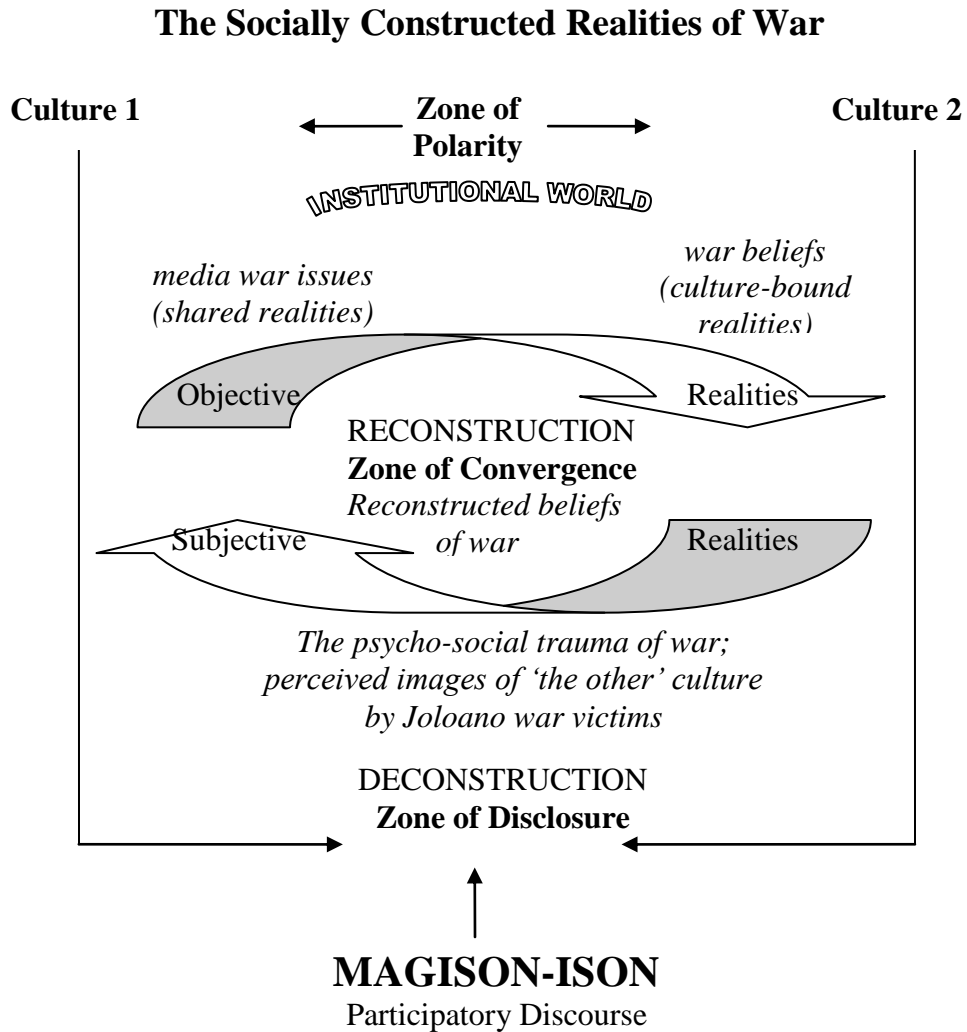


Figure 3. The Process of Deconstructing and Reconstructing Realities of War Through Magison-ison



Objective realities as suggested by Berger and Luckmann “possess a reality of their own that confronts the individual as an external coercive fact” having been transmitted over and beyond the individuals who initiated them by social interaction (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). Over the years therefore, two socializing diverse cultures would have accumulated objective realities inherited from the older generations as legacies of constructive as well as negative experiences of social encounters in the past. Having *thickened* and *hardened* through the process of transmission these realities have become institutions confronting both cultures as self-evident and unalterable.

It is thus necessary to point out at this juncture the history and the unique social structure of the two cultures which have tremendously determined their so-called *divergence* not only as an ethnic group but as people who belong to one nation - one culture belonging to the majority (the Christians), and the other to the minority (the Muslims).

Traversing along this line of thought, an analysis of the present construction of war among the Christian and Muslim Joloanos is presented in **Figure 2**. Two spirals are shown advancing in a parallel direction along the same time frame. Each loop the spirals make corresponds to a stage in their reality construction. The first is referred to as a *zone of polarity* suggesting a stage where these two cultures’ divergent beliefs are maintained and legitimized by existing institutions (distinct objective realities). The contradiction is shown above by two arrows in the opposite directions. At some point, an attempt to reconcile and arrive at a compromise is reached as indicated by the two

arrows facing each other. This constitutes a *zone of compromise*, the second stage. The spirals move onward to the third stage where a *reversal to status quo* is depicted implying a return to the original state of polarity for their failure to find a mutual ground. The stages are repeated following the same order of succession.

This analytical framework would characterize the existing reality construction among Joloanos as a *tug-of-war*. The constant push and pull of contradicting construction and interpretation of war is a reflection of the historically and socially determined bifurcation between these two cultures through the years. In search of a means to liberate these cultures from a seemingly *perpetual state of polarity* which has defined their social realities and affected their present beliefs of war, the study applied Krippendorff's ECT.

Combining the framework of Tojos (1999) and Cureg (2004), in a modified version, the study proposed a self-reflexive and socially constructive mode of *deconstruction* and *reconstruction* called Magison-ison. The term means engaging in a form of rhetorical exchange in the Taosug dialect fluently spoken by both the Christian and Muslim Joloanos. **Figure 3** illustrates the process of Magison-ison as a participatory mode of discourse.

Deconstruction visualizes a 'zone of disclosure' suggesting an 'interruption' in the flow of transmission of objective realities by divergent cultures. This stage signifies efforts of two cultures not only to "compromise" but to accommodate dissimilarities in their respective realities. The process engaged both cultures in surfacing "disabling perplexities and perturbations" as coined by Alfonso (2001) that have *entrapped* them in a *perpetual state of polarity*. All the while *the self* and *the social* are both given

importance in reality construction. Throughout the process the researcher facilitated fruitful encounters between the two cultures.

The entire idea of deconstruction involved a *disclosure* reflective of the voices of the participants at the grassroots. Through Magison-ison, the study created a situation “to put in motion the reflexive process of allowing voices of the taken-for-granted world to participate in constructing their realities through dialogues of the culture...” (Gergen, 1994). In the same manner, Alfonso (2001), in her *Socially Shared Inquiry (SSI)* introduced a methodology that directly involves members of a community. Through SSI’s notion of ‘poietic construction’ divergent culture in the study became actively engaged in identifying and clarifying their realities (23). The assumptions of Symbolic Convergence Theory unfolded motives and values behind the shared concepts of war and explained the sense of cohesion fostered between the two cultures as a result of the dynamic exchanges. The study’s methodology thus mainly applied fantasy theme analysis.

Deconstruction or disclosure through Magison-ison provided a venue for divergent cultures to merge their subjective (internal) and objective (external) realities. It prodded each member of a culture to *internalize* (experience sense of awareness, recognition and acceptance) the tension, pain and stress caused by the war. And correlate such internalization with the *external* conditions (socio-economic, political constraints and roles played by the media and other traditional entrepreneurs of meaning) making up their social world. Unlike SCRT, the concept of actively involving *the self* in reality construction is explained by Shotter (1993) in his Conversational Realities as an important aspect of communication. “It releases psychology from its



colonization by an ahistorical asocial, instrumental, individualistic cognitivism, to open-up to a large scale, more participatory, and dialogical form of relational activities. In this manner social construction becomes collaborative” (9). In effect, Magison-ison enabled members of two cultures to experience a sense of belonging in the other cultures’ reality and in the process, “make them see themselves as inner representations of the outer state of affairs (concerning both cultures)” (39).

Reconstruction afforded the co-authors the opportunity for convergence. As two distinct cultures they would have decided ‘what’ and ‘why’ *dereified* (deconstructed) realities were considered facilitative for them after re-visioning and re-articulating these realities. The stage of convergence as envisioned in the study would connote the two cultures’ recognition of their respective idiosyncracies to conform to the changing realities rather than a search for one ‘absolute truth’.

Through the reflexive process of Magison-ison (see Figure 3) both cultures were granted space to dereify and reconstruct their war realities reflective of their present truth thereby liberating them from some self-referential trap. The actual truth for them may not be ideal so as to bring about complete harmony but realistic enough to make them more appreciative and accepting of each other. The experience therefore allowed them a sense of oneness not only as survivors of war but as peoples of one nation.

### **III. Definition of Terms**

1. *A parallel reality construction* is a phenomenon that describes how meanings can simultaneously be institutionalized among distinct and co-existing cultures.

It explains how in a community where diversity thrives comparable ways of looking at things may be possible.

2. *Joloano war survivors* are the Christian and Muslim Joloanos who survived the 1974 siege and the on-going conflicts in Sulu. They are residents of the community of Jolo or any municipality of the province of Sulu.
3. *The 1974 mutiny* is the bloodiest battle ever to have fought in Sulu between the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) during the Marcos rule.
4. *Magison-ison* in Taosug means a lively discourse popular among the Joloanos as a form of recreation. In the study it is applied as an emancipatory process of communication or a “dialogue” involving the Joloano war survivors in “co-authoring” their realities of war.
5. *Fantasy themes* as applied in the study are actual renditions or accounts of war stories (1974 mutiny and/or present conflicts) experienced directly or indirectly by the Joloano war survivors. The concept is introduced in Bormann’s theory of Symbolic Convergence.
6. *Reflexive Elaboration* is a concept adapted in the study’s methodology that enriched its focus interviews and focus group discussions. It involves “coaxing” from the researcher/ facilitator by citing similar situations of the topics being discussed from readings and first hand experience of the war.
7. *Mindanao conflict* is a long-standing controversy in southern Philippines wherein the struggle for power between the government and the Muslim

freedom fighters (MNLF/MILF) is believed to have worsened poverty and unrest among peoples in conflict areas.

8. The *Mindanao conciliation process* is the on-going peace negotiation between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the Muslim freedom fighters (MNLF/MILF) in response to their clamor for “autonomy.”
9. The *Tripoli* is a treaty of peace and “autonomy” for the Muslims concluded between the Marcos administration and the MNLF in 1975 with the concurrence of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC).
10. *The war rehabilitation programs* have been initiated by the government to alleviate poverty and improve peace and order situation in the conflict areas in Mindanao. They take the form of loans, livelihood projects, peace advocacy seminars and capability building trainings for local government officials and recipients of programs. The programs were implemented in the Special Zone for Peace and Development (SZOPAD) in Mindanao and undertaken by the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) Special Council for Peace and Development (SPCPD).

## CHAPTER FOUR

### METHODS AND PROCEDURE

*It is essential to set in motion processes of reflexive deliberation which call attention to the historically and culturally situated characters of the taken-for-granted world, which reflect on their potentials for suppression and which open space for other voices in the dialogues of the culture...*

Kenneth J.Gergen

Guided by the principles of qualitative research I was able to probe on the realities of two historically and culturally situated groups of people, the Christian and Muslim Joloanos of Sulu. By creating the appropriate occasions for them to reflect on and confront their stories of war. The research design and methodology I have adapted is basically reflective of a constructionist framework to get a deeper understanding of how the meanings of war were constructed between these two unique cultures.

#### I. Design and Method

*If you want to know about something, why not just go where it is happening and watch it happen, experience it, perhaps participate in it? (Babbie, 1998: 280).*

The present work follows the qualitative form of inquiry as described by Babbie in his definition of what field research is all about. And as furthermore described by Guy, “the main component of the concept of ‘field’, is that it ‘locates’ the research in a particular place- the place which the phenomenon being investigated occurs (Guy, 1987: 255).

I have therefore immersed myself in the field and experienced actual encounters with the subjects and setting in the study. The fieldwork however was in essence a re-entry into the world I am familiar with since I have returned not only as a researcher but a stakeholder in my own community after years of absence. The research being exploratory in nature has furthermore prompted me not only to uncover “the way things are” between Christian and Muslim Joloanos of Sulu but “how things ought to be” between these two cultures who have a long history of conflict brought about by historical contingencies in the past.

The emerging significance of ‘text’ (linguistic categories) in representing ethnographic data inspired me to analyze the phenomenon based on the “*fantasy themes*” of the war and its aftermath. Through rhetorical discourses I found the ‘spoken text’ facilitative for substantiating existing facts in the study. The emphasis placed on ‘textuality’ of the ethnographic facts over the ‘factuality’ of the ethnographic text seemed to have recently dominated representations in qualitative research (Maanen, 1988).

I furthermore applied “reflexive elaboration” as a process to enhance the study’s methodology as earlier used in the works of Pasumbal (2000) and Cureg (2004). During the FIs and the FGDs, I have launched into a discourse around a given set of events and series of interpretation regarding the war from my readings and personal experience for the participants’ inspection. They were urged to disclose their own narratives and in the process were able to highlight key components common in their fantasy themes during the discussions.

The entire idea was for both cultures to simultaneously construct “new lamination of meanings” on their war stories as attempts to break hold of the “ostensibly real” created by preceding accounts. The meaning of the phenomenon is thus expanded “generating continuous reflexivity and new forms of linguistic reality to emerge” between the two cultures (Pasumbal, 2000).

## **II. Concepts and Indicators**

1. *Subjective realities of war* pertain to the Joloano war survivors’ individual experiences of the 1974 war and the on-going conflicts in Sulu. In the study they were indicated as follows:
  - a. The co-authors psycho-social trauma of the war e.g. fear, contempt, desperation among others..
  - b. The co-authors perceived images of “the other” culture as co-survivors of war e.g. partners, leaders, oppressors among others.
2. *Objective realities of war* refer to the institutionalized realities of the 1974 war and the on-going conflicts in Sulu as established in the community by societal institutions adhered to by the Christian and Muslim Joloano war survivors. They were categorized as follows:
  - a. *Shared institutional realities* are war concepts shared by Joloano war survivors by virtue of common insitutionalizing agents in the community (media, political and other social agents). They include media war issues and other concepts of war.

Media war issues in the study are perceptions of the war survivors of the role of the media in Mindanao conflict and other media issues.

They were indicated by the following circumstances:

- Christian and Muslim co-authors' subscription of radio, TV and the newspapers in the community;
- Christian and Muslim co-authors' ownership of radio, TV and other mediums of information;
- Prevailing media war issues commonly raised by the co-authors in the FGDs e.g. Media as crystallizers of war issues in Mindanao; news on the Tripoli, ARMM. Peace Talks and war rehabilitation programs.

Other concepts of war are local political and social issues shared by the Joloanos in the community. They constitute the following in the study:

- Christian and Muslim co-authors' familiarity with the political set up and social climate as residents in the community (local governance and social relations between Muslims and Christians).
- Christian and Muslim co-authors' exposure to past and present conflicts in the community by virtue of their residency in the area;

- Other concepts of war commonly identified by the participants in separate FGDs e.g. Muslims wanted absolute control; Christians wanted to dominate the Muslims; Christians and Muslims can never co-exist peacefully.
- b. *Culture-bound realities* are beliefs peculiar to Christian and Muslim Joloano war survivors evidenced by:
- Christian Joloanos' adherence to war belief(s) unique among Christians;
  - Muslim Joloanos' adherence to war belief(s) distinct among Muslims;
  - Culture-related issues of war commonly identified by Christian and Muslim co-authors in separate FGDs e.g. The 1974 siege in Jolo was a form of "jihad"; the Mindanao peace process is reflective of the local concept of "conciliation."

### **III. Self-Reflexivity in Co-Authoring Realities**

The essence of self-reflexivity was fundamental in my study. It was highlighted by Krippendorff in his *emancipatory communication* and as a methodology involving *poietic construction* as conceptualized by Alfonso (2001) in her Socially Shared Inquiry (SSI).

I therefore consider of prime importance in surfacing the 'realities' of two divergent and co-existing cultures their active participation in co-authoring their own stories of war. This is necessary because the seemingly perpetual 'state of polarity' or



conflict constructed between the two cultures over the years has ripened into a *self-referential trap* leaving both uncertain and resigned to their present reality. Thus the need is urgent for them to collectively dereify their realities as co-authors in a disclosure through reflexive dialogues.

As a researcher and facilitator therefore I was able to provide the ideal situation that brought the two cultures “together” for the “co-authoring” to take place.

#### **IV. Situating the Researcher in the Reflexive Study**

Like Alfonso (2001) and her concept of an *enabler*, I have placed premium on the facilitator’s (researcher) intensive involvement in research. My role in the present work therefore was enhanced instead of obscured. In a similar approach, Coffey (1999) in *The Ethnography of Self: Field Work and the Representation of Identity*, sees the importance of projecting not only one’s presence but thoughts in a down-to-earth account of real life stories involving live characters and places that make up the researcher’s world. In the study, my presence helped forge enriching rhetorical revelations that allowed both cultures the “space” they needed to jointly appraise their past, comprehend their present and reconstruct their future realities.

Having been born of a mixed marriage, survived the 1974 war in Jolo, and spent my lifetime living the realities of two cultures (Christian and Muslim), I have in effect become a stakeholder in the study. This made my undertaking self-reflexive and at the same time ideal for connecting the two cultures being studied.

#### **V. Composition and Selection of Co-Authors and Other Participants**

The co-authors in the study involved two core groups of Joloano war survivors, the Christians and the Muslims, categorized into three age groupings to determine transitions in their perceptions across age. The groups were comprised of the elderly (ages 60-82); the middle-aged (ages 35-59); and the young adults (ages 18-29) whose parents or grandparents were victims of war. The third group may not be direct witnesses of the 1974 war but were nevertheless considered war survivors in the study being long time residents of a war-torn community.

Clustered according to religious affiliation the core groups (the Muslim and Christian co-authors) engaged in focus interviews (Fis) for the disclosure or the *deconstruction* phase of Magison-ison. By age category the Christian and Muslim co-authors unfolded their *fantasy themes* (narratives of war) from the earliest they can recall to the 1974 war and its aftermath. The data elicited from the FIs constituted their subjective realities. Two separate focus group discussions (FGDs) for Muslims and Christians combining age groups were conducted thereafter to extract their perceptions on shared issues and beliefs of war. This information made up their objective realities.

FIs were furthermore taken from selected personalities to draw out their beliefs of war in relation to the responsibility they hold in the community. Their stories constitute an essential part of local consciousness. The FIs involved traditional leaders and war combatants in the locality who were both Christians and Muslims. Their revelations provided insights on the motives and values behind the prevailing notions of war in a community of mixed culture.

FGDs were subsequently conducted separately for the two core groups, one for the Muslim co-authors and another for the Christians. In a joint activity the participants

across age engaged in the *reconstruction* phase of Magison-ison as they collectively deliberated on their experiences. In the process the co-authors became actively involved as individuals and as cultures in reconstructing their world. As individuals “the self” allowed them to internalize the circumstances of the war building a sense of awareness, recognition and acceptance among themselves of their present state. From a cultural lens, “the social” enabled them to appraise their situation from a broader perspective.

By *sifting* through all these multiple realities the study explored on the possibility of finding not only convergence and/or divergence but of understanding the social forces behind possible transitions in their perceptions.

## **VI. Instrument**

Four sets of instruments were utilized throughout the process of Magison-ison. For the deconstruction phase an *interview schedule* was prepared for the focus interviews of co-authors held separately according to religious affiliation (Christian and Muslim war survivors) to generate in-depth information of their *subjective realities* of war (the psycho-social impact of war and their perceptions of the other culture’s role in the war).

Another is an *interview guide* for the FGD of the two core groups to surface their perceived role(s) of the media in disseminating information of conflicts and other media war issues about Mindanao which form part of public consciousness. Questions on war beliefs were included in the instrument to surface their cultural-bound realities in relation with the on-going war in Mindanao. The data constituted their objective realities in the study.

A separate *interview schedule* for the traditional representatives were prepared to enhance prevailing war realities among Joloano war victims taking into account the local customs and practices. Their insights of the war have projected motives and values behind stories of the war survivors.

The fourth instrument is a *discussion guide* utilized in the reconstruction phase of Magison-ison of the co-authors (across age). In two separate FGDs, the co-authors (Christians and Muslims) were engaged in reflexive dialogic discourse as they correlate their subjective (internal) and objective (external) realities of war affecting them as unique cultures.

The discussion guide for the FGDs and the interview schedule for the FIs were pretested with long-time residents in the community of Jolo, three (3) Muslims and three (3) Christians who have mostly experienced the war. Two (2) key leaders (Muslim and Christian) from Jolo participated in the pretesting of the interview schedule designed for institutional and traditional leaders. Those who participated in the pretesting of the instruments were not made part of the respondents in the study.

## **VII. Transcriptions of FGDs and FIs**

It took me over five (5) months to transcribe the FIs and FGDs from its original Tausog version and into English having found the need to confer with the co-authors for verification in cases where portion of their rhetorical accounts were unclear.

I have utilized micro cassette recorder and tapes for recording the entire FGDs and FIs.

## **VIII. Data Construction Process**

### *Magison-ison: A Co-Authoring of Realities by Two Cultures*

The whole process of Magison-ison which means ‘dialogue’, was conducted in Taosug, the local tongue fluently spoken not only by the native Muslims but by the Christians who have long resided in Jolo. The elderly and the middle-aged groups applied Taosug as a medium throughout the process of FIs and FGDs while the young adults opted for a combination of Tagalog and Taosug.

My re-entry to Jolo comprised the first phase of my fieldwork after temporary absence since the 1974 war. It was imperative for me to re-establish link with the community and to connect the Christian and Muslim co-authors in the study. They constituted the two core groups segregated further according to age (the elderly, the middle-aged, and the young adults). Majority of the co-authors are familiar with one another having long resided in Jolo. There were preliminary visitations and group gatherings among the co-authors which I have initiated to ‘*break the ice*’ among co-authors as they prepared themselves for the FIs and the FGDs.

The second phase of the study's methodology was the '*deconstruction*' stage otherwise known as '*disclosure*'. I have engaged the two core groups in two separate focus interviews by religious affiliation. For the Muslim group, three focus interviews were conducted for the elderly, the middle-aged and the young adults, specifically to examine transitions in their perceptions of war across age. In the same manner focus interviews were undertaken for the Christian group. Each focus interview included three co-authors from the Muslim and Christian groups.

The process of '*disclosure*' was initiated through FIs to elicit the *fantasy themes* of war from the co-authors (Joloano war victims) purposely to generate in-depth information relevant to their *subjective realities* (psycho-social impact of the war; perceptions of the 'the other' culture's role/image as co-survivors of war). *Objective realities* (shared institutionalized beliefs) were further generated from the two core groups. The study examined their perceptions of the conflict in relation to established beliefs in the community. They were made to surface concepts of the media's institutionalized role in transmitting realities of war in Mindanao and other issues relevant to the on-going peace advocacy and rehabilitation programs of the government in conflict communities. Commonly-held war beliefs (culture-bound realities) were further examined to see how these would correlate with their subjective realities. Separate FIs were initiated for the community leaders and traditional representatives to surface their own perceptions of the war which in effect provided a clear understanding of the prevailing consciousness in the community. The information evoked insightful explanations of the values and motives behind the co-authors' fantasy narratives of war.

The *reconstruction* or the final stage in the study looks at the possibility of finding convergence and/or divergence in the realities of the Joloano war victims. In the two FGDs held separately for the two core groups (Muslim and Christian co-authors combining the elderly, the middle-aged and the young adults), joint reflections of their perceptions of the war were undertaken. They were made to engage in *reflexive elaboration* by responding on the “institutionalized” issues and concepts of war (objective realities) taking into account their own subjective experiences. In effect, the co-authors were able to correlate their notions of war not only with the prevailing beliefs but with each other’s perceptions as unique cultures. This stage allowed them to accept realities closely attuned with their truths and reject those that clashed. This stage was significant for both cultures for it has shown their propensity to justify and accommodate each other by correcting false assumptions of war relevant to the beliefs of “the other.” Despite divergence, the *Christians* and *Muslim* Joloanos exhibited mutual familiarity which to some extent pointed on instances where they can be *parallel*. This final stage allowed the co-authors an occasion to reconcile their realities of war based on their respective *truth*. A truth, which according to Burr (1997) could be useful, facilitative and emancipatory for two cultures (3).

## **IX. Fantasy Theme Analysis**

Bormann’s concept of *fantasy theme analysis* has been useful in identifying key concepts commonly linked with the Christian and Muslim co-authors’ versions of the war. The recurrence of people, situations and events in their *fantasy themes* through chain reactions demonstrated “symbolic convergence” or a feeling of cohesion among

them. It provided an over-arching concept in examining the narratives thereby subsequently disclosing elements of convergence and divergence in the war survivors' subjective and objective realities.

A rhetorical analysis of these fantasy themes was essential in my study. By examining the key components of fantasy themes (characters, scenes, plot, setting, sanctioning agents) from their narratives, I was able to uncover some similarity and dissimilarity in their individual experiences. These included their psycho-social trauma and perceptions of 'the other' culture giving me a meaningful insight of the motives behind their stories. Furthermore, I have extracted the prevailing *objective realities* (institutionalized war issues and beliefs) in the community from the FGDs conducted with the war survivors on two separate occasions. In another round of FGDs I was able to draw out the reactions of the Christian and Muslim participants toward public issues and beliefs of war. In the end, a synthesis of their perceptions was presented in a parallel form.

A historical account of the past realities of war in Sulu further enhanced the study. The co-authors categorized by age groups actively engaged in a series of dialogues indicating shifts in their perceptions. A highly participatory and reflective analysis of their subjective realities paved the way for both Christian and Muslim Joloano war survivors to co-author their realities and to deal with the notions of diversity that characterized their relations through the years.

## **X. Reflexive Elaboration in Deconstructing and Reconstructing Realities of War**



The three (3) modes of *reflexive elaboration* as discussed by Pasumbal (2000) were employed throughout the study:

- First, a series of relative interpretation of the phenomenon from my readings of related literature; my personal experience of the 1974 war; and my familiarity with the culture of the peoples in the community were taken into account during the FIs and FGDs;
- Second, I allowed joint inspection of the phenomenon by the co-authors (Christian and Muslim war survivors) through the FIs and joint FGDs to surface their own interpretations of war and expand or question their initial understanding thereby demonstrating potentials and limitations;
- And finally, through the reflexive discussions as a facilitator I was able to add voices to the emerging body and interpretation of the phenomenon as two cultures (Christian and Muslim war survivors) provided new meanings to the realities of war not as opposing voices but as distinct yet convergent voices that have synthesized their vistas of understandings.

## **XI. Methodological Limitations**

As a researcher and a facilitator I learned that the most difficult part of my fieldwork was to run after time. Thus, what initially was intended in my research as six months duration for gathering data was stretched to more than eight months. I had to set and reset schedules of FIs and FGDs for the convenience of the participants. The interruptions in my work were caused mainly by the unpredictable peace and order

condition in the area which complicated matters for I was not only exercising utmost care for my own security but for those of my key informants. There were co-authors (key informants) who gave leave for their names to be used originally in their stories however there were others who preferred not to be identified for confidential reasons.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

*I believe it is the task of a social constructionist to develop a concept of 'self' which is both constructed and constructing, to study the processes by which people simultaneously construct themselves and are constructed in the social realm...*

Vivien Burr

This chapter contains five subsections beginning with a comprehensive description of the profile of Sulu and its people. In the section that followed, the war survivors' multiple war realities were sifted and presented in an overview. A discussion of the co-authors' psycho-social trauma and perceptions of the "the other" culture which constituted their *subjective* realities was presented thereafter. Another section sorted out their institutionalized beliefs of war as their *objective* realities. Towards the end an examination of the motives behind these institutionalized beliefs taken from the war accounts of selected key actors and traditional leaders was presented.

The revelations of the participants surfaced untold insights of the factors that immensely influenced shifts in their consciousness in a community where conflict and diversity thrive. Their narratives were both retrospective and introspective in the sense that it unfolded historical details of "the war" in Sulu as well as unraveled their own stories.

The echoes of war in the past were essentially resurrected in their discussions reflecting the mindset of people constantly exposed to battles. Hence, the study penetrated not only their thoughts but their hearts as they disclosed a significant drama in their lives.

#### **I. The Walled Town of Jolo**

Mainland Jolo with ten other municipalities is one of the four island groupings that comprised the province of Sulu in southern Philippines. These include the Toongkil, the Pangutaran and the Siasi-Tapul groups.

In the past, the Spaniards used the term “Sulu” to refer to the island of Jolo. The name was first written ‘Suluk’ and then later ‘Sulu’ which means *current of the sea*. Today, the term *Lupah Sug* (Land of Sulu) is the name given to the chain of islands situated between the two large masses of Borneo and Mindanao excluding Tawi-Tawi which was created later in 1975.

Oral traditions (*tarsillas*) speak of four groups who settled in Sulu in the early times. Cabel (1989) identified these people as the *Tau Gimba* (people of the interior); the *Tagimaha* (party of nobles); the *Tau higad* (people of the coast) and the *Samals* (boat dwellers). The Tausog comprised the biggest ethnic group in the province today. A few of the inhabitants are Taglogs, Chavacanos, Ilocanos and Visayans. About 92% of the population constitutes the Muslims and the remaining 8% are Christians, Buddhist and others based on the Philippine census of 1995.

The research centered in Jolo because it is where the phenomenon investigated is believed to have partly taken roots and therefore where answers can be found.

#### **A. Early Beginnings**

The quaint town of Jolo has long been a silent witness to gory battles fought between the natives and foreign invaders. Its liberation from the hands of alien intruders seemed to have somehow simply transferred the realities of war and their struggle into an “insular” conflict between the inhabitant Muslims and

Christians which marked the long-standing *cultural bifurcation* acknowledged as a factual circumstance in Philippine history.

“*We were the first to rule*” was apparently the battle cry that inspired Muslim resistance over the centuries. As early as the last quarter of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, simultaneous with the birth of Muslim principalities in north Sumatra, Sulu had its share of Muslim coming to stay. This was mainly caused by the diaspora of Arabs driven from China 500 years earlier on account of the massacre of a large number of Muslims in Khanfu (Canton) by a Chinese rebel leader. Muslim merchants mostly Arabs and Persians fled to Kalah (Kedah of Klang) in the western coast of Malay Peninsula. Malay port settlement then became a major entrepot of Arab trade. Much later, Muslim traders spread out to wider perimeter bringing Sulu into the orbit of Islam and the attendant flourishing trade and commerce (Majul, 1983).

This era was marked by the arrival of two prominent characters – Karim-Ul-Makhdum and Rajah Baginda. Makhdum provided a healthy climate for the establishment of Baguinda’s polity in 1390 having forged the advent of Islam a decade earlier. Rajah Baginda founded the first principality at Buansa Jolo and married a Sulu princess. It was however Sayyid Abubakar married to Paramisuli the daughter of Rajah Baginda, who established the first sultanate in 1451. From 1460 to 1862, the Sulu sultanate reached the zenith of power and brought under its aegis the Zamboanga Peninsula (Sur and Norte), Basilan, Palawan and Sabah in British Borneo. Sulu became the sit of a powerful

sultanate with its trade links to China, the Middle East and the rest of South East Asia (Gowing, 1965).

## **B. The Iberian Presence**

The recognition of Sulu Sultanate in large measures has given the Muslims legitimate reasons to fight. And fought they did till the bitter end. The Iberian presence in Sulu (1876-1899) was short compared to centuries of occupation of the rest of the country. It was during this period that the savages or the 'Moros' as the Spaniards called the Muslims kept the latter under siege limiting the perimeter of their military administration within the walled town of Jolo (Intramuros). The Spaniards constructed the 8 feet brick walls around Jolo town proper as a defense against the 'sabil-illah' or the 'juramentado'. The 'juramentado' was a term used by the Spaniards to refer to a male Muslim who would kill 'khaffirs' or infidels in defense of Islam.

Despite this volatile condition a network of infrastructure was laid out in the town by the Spanish military to include the drainage system, roads, wharfs, the lighthouse, water system, office and business house, church and a plaza. The town was immaculately clean and green with trees and flowering shrubs. A military headquarter was built outside of the walled town at Asturias (named after Princess Asturias of Spain) as well as lookouts in strategic places (Saleeby, 1905).

Continued fighting however isolated Sulu economically from its trading partners, the Dutch held Indonesia and the British held Borneo. Furthermore the

town of Jolo and the Sulu province suffered heavily with the bombardment coming from superior Spanish naval forces: Figueroa (June 1578); Concuera (January 14, 1876), Urbiztondo (February 28, 1851) and Malcampo (February 29, 1876). Self rule, prosperity and power eventually gave way to the debilitating effect of centuries of resistance against Spanish colonialism (the Moro wars and Opium). It was during this period that the animosity of the Muslims toward the Spaniards and their proselytizing missions extended to the Christian converts marking the beginning of a 'cultural bifurcation' (Tan & Wadi, 2003).

### **C. The American Policy of Attraction**

The Iberians' defeat against the Americans in their fight over Cuba wrote finis to their 377 year stay in the Philippines. For 17 years (1899-1963) thereafter, four successive American governors left imprints of their footsteps on the Sands of Sulu political history. The seemingly altruistic intention of the Americans "to civilize and educate the Moros" was translated into deadly encounters in Sulu between the Moros and the Americans in the Battle of Bud Daho (Battle of Clouds, March 1906) and the Battle of Bud Bagsak (June 15, 1913). With the use of the newly invented .45 caliber then, thousands of Moros were massacred.

The mailed policy of General Leonard Wood, the first military governor was eventually tempered. Adopting a 'policy of attraction' that fostered good will among the native Muslims, this policy shaped the American objectives of integrating cultural minorities (Muslims) into the national political mainstream during the American civil administration.

The Muslims' hostility gave way to cooperation as they look forward to the promise that "the political control of Sulu Province would eventually devolve upon the non-Christian majority." The Filipinization of the Philippine government which covered Mindanao, led to the creation of the Department of Mindanao and Sulu in 1931.

Meanwhile mass in-migration to Sulu by Christians from Luzon and the Visayas was intensified by virtue of the American mandate and due to paucity



of qualified workers and trained manpower needed to set the new government machinery in motion. The hostility between the Muslims and Christians seemed to have been held in check because of a number of political and economic opportunities open for both. In the field of public education for example, Muslim Joloanos mostly from the royal families were sent to Manila or abroad for schooling. Princess Tarhata Kiram of Jolo was sent to the University of Illinois (United States of America) to finish a degree in education. Other reputable families from Jolo who benefited were the: Julkarnains, Bahjins, Abirins, Rasuls, Shucks, Tahils and Tulawies. This period furthermore saw the Moros gradually joining in the political arena. Even Najeeb Saleeby (writer and historian) a Lebanese Arab but protestant by faith, was appointed as the Division Superintendent of Schools in Sulu by the American Provincial governor due to his familiarity with the Muslims.

Along the area of Public Works and Transportation and Communication much were accomplished. Roads and bridges were constructed that linked the outside municipalities to the interior town of Jolo. This accelerated mobility of the inhabitants and enhanced commercial intercourse. In 1920 the public telephone system was installed which linked Jolo to the municipalities of Taglibi, Camp Andes (Luuk), Tandu Batu, Camp Romandier (Bilaan), Indanan, Parang and Maimbung. This public utility was first managed by Vicente Paulate the office was first housed in the Jolo municipal building where the fire Department now stands. The electrification of Jolo was undertaken 1924 during the incumbency of Governor Carl Moore located at the same site which used to

be military reservation. In 1930 Aboitiz and company took full control of the electric system of Jolo Power Incorporated. By virtue of the socialization of energy production, the Jolo power incorporated was transferred to the public ownership and the Sulu Electric Cooperative (SULECO) was born (Cabel, 1989: 6).

#### **D. The Commonwealth and the Republican Era**

Sulu appeared to have experienced a golden era throughout the commonwealth government. It was during this time that the Sulu province was created on March 19, 1917 by Commonwealth Act no. 2711. Signs of economic progress seemed to have given the Muslims and Christians space to reconsider their social relations. And so, with the advent of World War II (Japanese Imperialism-1941-1945), history saw both the Muslims and Christians fighting side by side with the Americans against the Japanese.

With the restoration of the government and the rebirth of the Republic in 1946, national life stirred anew along with the traditional economic and pursuits of trading, commerce and agriculture in Sulu. A new social consciousness developed among Muslims – the consciousness of ‘retrieving leadership in his native land’. Popular suffrage arrived in Jolo albeit late. More Muslims started participating in politics, education and government administration hitherto dominated by migrants and native born Christians.

Towards the end of this epoch the reality of war and the concept of divisiveness’ between Muslim and Christians of Sulu seemed to have taken a

positive turn. A sense of role and responsibility that engulfed the Muslims of Sulu after long periods of neglect and discontent seemed to have put their biases of the Christians to rest. And a peaceful co-existence began (Gowing, 1978).

#### **E. The Martial Law Regime**

With the advent of the Marcos administration and his Martial Law regime much later however, another fight erupted. The 1974 warfare in Jolo was considered the bloodiest battle ever to be associated with the so-called “conflict” between Filipino Christians and Muslims forming part of the significant issues in the Mindanao problem (Gutierrez, et al., 1997).

This period is crucial in the history of Sulu when “shifts” in the perceptions of the Joloanos has been manifested strongly from their accounts of the war. Intense emotions have characterized the descriptions of their psycho-social conditions and appraisal of the images of “the other” culture as their co-survivors in the tragic incident.

The present study scrutinized evolving reality constructions of war among the Muslim and Christians of Sulu. It delved into the impact of the war and its attendant circumstances in the life and social relations of the Christian and Muslim Joloanos who recounted their own stories as war victims.

#### **F. Present Day Sulu**

The socio-economic profile of the province of Sulu reveals that its income and expenditure pattern is reflective of its own poverty incidence from

1985-1988. Its poverty threshold in 1985 was placed at P1,988.00. The figure was below the poverty line with average income ranging from P701.00 to P1,455.00. The poor sectors in Sulu consist of the marginal farmers in the upland (rainfed areas and coconut farms), the municipal and sustenance folks, the seaweed growers, families displaced by unstable peace and order condition and the cultural minorities.

Table 1. Sulu Poverty Incidence 1985-1988\*

Area	Poverty Threshold	Poverty Incidence	Poverty Threshold	Poverty Incidence
Philippines	2,381	59.0	2,709	49.5
Region	2,119	63.9	2,289	32.0
Sulu	1,988	51.9	N.D.	N.D.
By Regional Standard		75.7		
By National Standard		75.7		
All Classes 65, 105 HE				
Under 10, 000	701	4.9		
10,000-14,703	1,118	22.6		
15,000-19,999	1,455	24.4		
20,000-29,999	2,065	23.8		
30,000-39,999	2,737	14.0		
40,000-49,999	3,938	7.8		
60,000 and over	6,611	2.4		

\*Source: Sulu Socio-economic Profile, PPBO (2000)

Sulu has remained poor and ailing due to a host of factors. The more notable factors as documented in its socio-economic profile are: low productivity, unstable peace and order, scanty support and social services, plight of capital, environmental degradation and incapacitated people (The Socio-economic Profile of Sulu, 2000).

## **G. Religious Affiliation**

The majority or 96.6% of Sulu's population professes Islam while 1.49 % practices Christianity. A few or 1.9% of the provincial population is affiliated with other religions. The data is taken from the recently available Census of Population report (National Statistics Office, 2000).

Table 2. Sulu Household Population by Religious Affiliation\*

<b>Religious Affiliation</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent (%)</b>
Islam	452,871	96.59
Roman Catholic	6,838	1.49
United Church of Christ in the Philippines	1,352	0.42
Seventh Day Adventist	115	0.01
Iglesia ni Cristo	104	
Buddhist	159	
Others		
Not stated	7,417	1.49
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>468,856</b>	<b>100.00</b>

\*Source: Sulu Socio-economic Profile, PPBO (2000)

## **H. Communication Facilities**

Sulu has two radio stations located in Jolo one of which is a government-owned DXSM Radyo ng Bayan another is the privately owned DXMM. A Television Station which is affiliated with ABS-CBN is managed by DXMM TV 10. Telegraphic services in the province used to be provided by RCPI and PT &T. Presently, MSCI a privately owned telephone company is operating as its communication system in the area including the recently established cellular phone services Smart and Globe with limited operations only in the municipality of Jolo which is Sulu's business center.

## **II. Sifting Through the Multiple Realities of War**

My *re-entry* to Jolo constituted the **first phase** of my fieldwork as I immersed myself once more in the exotic feel of the place and the people. I painstakingly engaged in a recollection of the past attempting to locate myself in the episode. Visualizing the succession of events like dramatic clips from a film, I wrote my own story and consequently sifted through all the various interpretations of the tragedy from my own lens and my co-authors'.

*My Story of the War: The Link to the Past*

(The Researcher as a Stakeholder)

The intense heat was burning my cheeks. It was raining heavily with gray ashes carried by strong winds from the raging inferno. The whole town of Jolo was ablaze. We were trapped along with my Christian and Muslim relatives and friends awaiting the inevitable at the residence of Judge Moreno, a well-respected Christian community leader born in Jolo. *“Bang kita matay ha pag-bunoh ini marayaw pa in nag-a-agad na kita Christians iban Muslims “* [If we are going to die, we better stick together Christians and Muslims...], declared Judge Moreno. Just a few meters away from where we stood, the huge cross built on top of the Notre Dame Church smoldered in flames. By sudden stroke of fate however, the blazing fire changed directions and we were spared. Our class, batch '74 of the Notre Dame Elementary school failed to graduate. The war broke on February 7, 1974 just a couple of days before graduation.

At twelve years of age the entire event seemed incredible to me. The Philippine Marines and Philippine Armed Forces of the Philippines confirmed on the third day of non-stop bullet exchange that the Muslim rebels or the “Maoists” believed to be adherents of the communist leader Mao Tse Tung penetrated mainland Jolo. Of course we often heard empty threats passed around earlier of the Maoists attack but it never materialized. And so, when my brothers and I saw a band of ordinary looking men and women cleaning their rifles next to our house we even stayed on and watched them. Some would ask for coffee and rice and we would deliver. My parents were never told for they never asked. We thought we were embarking on some exciting adventure. On the next day when the military detected the presence of the rebels, an encounter took

place right next to our door. And like an action-packed film, we saw how the Maoists fought bravely and how each one fell to the ground. They were outnumbered. Later that day, the whole town of Jolo was set on fire.

The entire province of Sulu was paralyzed. There were no means of transportation and communication. Snipers were all over the place. They were either rebels or government military who did not hesitate to pull the trigger on suspicious targets mostly civilians. It was difficult to identify the enemy who come from the same race. This time there were no alien intruders.

The town residents Muslims and Christians alike found themselves hurriedly ushered the next day by government soldiers toward the Philippine Constabulary Camp in Asturias to clear the area. We traversed the distance on foot. Along the way, Hamba my father and Uncle Manuel were held captive by the Philippine Marines because of some unconfirmed reports linking them with the rebels. We did not even have time to look back. Our safety was paramount. My mother was seven months pregnant and she had four kids to tag along. There were moans of despair and frantic shouts everywhere. Everybody seemed to be in search of a missing relative. Those who were too weak to leave their homes because of old age or illness opted to remain in town. A number of them died either because of fire or stray bullets. Along the pavement towards Muhammad Tulawie Elementary School were charred bodies of humans and animals lying on the ground.

We finally reached our destination at the PC Camp. Together with our Christian and Muslim neighbors and relatives we constructed a makeshift tent. The camp was situated on a slightly elevated ground. The whole area was crammed with evacuees.



The night fell with bullets crisscrossing the sky like resplendent fireworks on New Year's Eve. Perhaps still too young to ponder on the gravity of the situation, a mixture of dread and exhilaration overwhelmed me. My brothers and I would catch fireflies, play with them and fill up bottles with dozens to illuminate our tent as we were enveloped in complete darkness.

What endured in my memory even as a child however was the night when we decided to abscond from the camp without notifying the guards after being told that the rebels would bombard the PC camp shortly after nightfall. No one was allowed to return to town lest he or she be mistaken for a rebel. It was Sergeant Cabilin, a Christian from Samar who aided our escape along with his Muslim military friends. After having delivered us to our residence to be reunited with my father and Uncle whom they also rescued, they went back to their respective stations. That night, just as predicted the PC camp exploded with mortars damaging the Sulu Provincial hospital and the PC administration buildings simultaneously killing a number of evacuees. We were lucky to have been spared but our rescuers were not. They were gunned down on the night they saved us.

After weeks of total isolation, Sulu resumed transportation operation. Naval forces came to provide military reinforcement. Our family along with a number of evacuees Christian and Muslim alike migrated to Zamboanga, Manila and other parts of Luzon and Visayas, not to visit Jolo and the memories of the 1974 war for a long time.

*My Return*

Pangs of anguish... terror...foreboding...filled me when I left as a child. But my yearning for something brighter like embers refused to die. As a child I saw beauty and travesty; glory and defeat that was Sulu. And so I came back.

As a researcher I have accomplished what I set out to do. More importantly, I was successful in having engaged myself in a self-reflexive journey. This journey I believed prompted the possibility of reviving even a fragment of the fruitful past; of reconstructing and fortifying the waning dreams of the Joloanos.

This undertaking may have sounded far-fetched at the outset but on the contrary it proved to be a pragmatic task involving real people beset with real dilemma. I therefore embarked on this journey not in solitude but with familiar people who have always been part of my reality. From among the Christian co-authors, Jose used to be my piano instructor as a child. Petrona on the other hand used to be a close friend of my paternal grandmother. Romeo is the husband of my mother's colleague who used to teach in the elementary grade. Most of the Muslim co-authors are known to me either as a relative or a friend. Hamba is my father who was then a struggling lawyer. He ventured out of Jolo and later returned with a Christian wife and three children in 1967 with me as the eldest (Appendix B12). Alona is my paternal cousin who is married to an ex-seminarian (Appendix B14). Most of the co-authors were residents of Barangay San Raymundo where the members of my family reside to date. The rest were from the neighboring barangays, Asturias and Busbus. The younger co-authors were mostly new acquaintances introduced to me by the older participants.

"I have reached a full circle." This is how I would describe my journey. In its culmination I have found not only "convergence" in my concept of parallel realities

among diverse peoples but a connection between my past and my present existence. In essence, this work afforded me the chance to dereify the probability of merging two cultures- Christianity and Islam amidst the prevailing notions of war.

### *Unfolding Our Stories of War*

(Narratives of the Co-Authors)

My story of the war would not have been complete without my co-authors whose realities are essentially intertwined with mine. Like a “jig saw puzzle” we have constructed each other and recollected the war as it evoked distinct realities from each of us. The final picture was only completed after we have assembled all the pieces together and viewed it from a lens that see from two perspectives. This process was the **second phase** of my data construction with individual co-authors providing in-depth account of their war experiences.

Table 3. Profile of Christian Joloano Co-Authors

Co-author	Age	Religion	Occupation	Length of stay	Religion of spouse
Jose	70	Catholic	retired teacher	since birth	Catholic
Romeo	68	Catholic	Engineer	45 yrs	Catholic
Petrona	72	Catholic	retired teacher	since birth	Islam
Sharon	40	Protestant	Housewife	32	Catholic
Peter	38	Catholic	Government employee	30	
Ronald	43	Iglesia	Self-employed	since birth	
Eric	21	Catholic	Student	since birth	
Mary Jane	23	Catholic	Student	15 yrs	
Allan	26	Iglesia	Student	since birth	

Among the Christian elders Romeo, 68, (Appendix A3) is the only one who is not born in Jolo. His wife is a descendant of the few Christian settlers in the place. He resided in Jolo for 45 years long enough he claimed to be able to say that the 1974 war was “a display of misguided beliefs” among Muslims. Jose, 70, (Appendix B1) and Petrona, 72, (Appendix B2) were both born in Jolo and used to be teachers. Their ascendants were early migrants who came to Jolo in 1940s. Jose is married to a Christian and believed that “the war was unnecessary” while Petrona who has a Muslim for a husband thought that it was a “desperate move on the part of the Muslims to be heard.”

Ronald, 43, (Appendix B6) was born and raised in Jolo unlike the rest of the middle-aged Christian participants. He is a mestizo born of a Taosug mother and a Catholic-Cebuano father. For him the 1974 war signified the culmination of some important things in his life. The more tragic were the separation of his parents after the war and their desertion as a consequence. By choice he professed Iglesia ni Kristo as a religion. Ronald argued that the siege was a blunder committed by Marcos and a burden

carried over to the present generation. Sharon, 40, (Appendix B5) admitted to feel more like a full-blooded Taosug than the native Joloanos having been exposed to the culture particularly of the Samals (sea dwellers) as a child. As a Protestant she claimed to have practiced her religion as a living faith by openly socializing with the Muslims in the community outreach and livelihood programs. The mutiny for her represented mistakes carried over from the past. Peter, 38, (Appendix B4) has resided in Jolo for 30 years. His orientation in school particularly from the Notre Dame of Jolo was responsible for his resilient outlook. The notion that the 1974 war was a manifestation of the “Marcos’ divide and rule policy” was evident in his narrative.

Mary Jane, 23, (Appendix B8) shared her gruesome experience of the beheading incidents in her narrative entitled “Heads Would Roll.” Her 15 years of stay in Jolo has certainly exposed her to different forms of violence which she maintained have extensively shaped her fears. She has been a student of a Catholic school noted in town, the Notre Dame of Jolo College (NDJC) just like Eric. As a Red Cross Volunteer Eric, 21, (Appendix B7) considered his exposure to military-rebel encounters part of routine. His valor is certainly fired by his youthfulness as he outspokenly described corruption and oppression taking place in the community asking “Who’s at fault now?” when nobody seemed to be honestly concerned about the present troubles in Sulu. Allan, 26, (Appendix B9) with his narrative of “Guns, Goons, and Gold” saw the present conflicts as mostly caused by influential people in town who are power-hungry.

The Muslim Joloano co-authors told their own war stories. Stirred by their personal beliefs they recounted how it was for them in the past and at present.

Table 4. Profile of Muslim Joloano Co-authors

<b>Co-author</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Religion</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Length of Stay</b>	<b>Religion of Spouse</b>
Babu Arag	72	Islam	Market Vendor	since birth	Islam
Jikirani	80	Islam	Farmer/Carpenter	since birth	Islam
Hamba	67	Islam	Lawyer	since birth	Balik Islam
Alona	40	Islam	Municipal Treasurer	since birth	Catholic
Muksan	49	Islam	Barter Trader	since birth	Islam
Hadja Fatima	47	Islam	Supervisor	since birth	Islam
Nuraiza	23	Islam	BSN Graduate	since birth	
Abdil	22	Islam	Cigarette Vendor	since birth	Islam
Hussein	25	Islam	Student	since birth	

Babu Arag, 72, (Appendix B10) had her own reasons for believing that the siege in 1974 was inevitable. “Way Makahundong ha pag-bunoh” [the war was inevitable]. Jikirani, 80, (Appendix B11) likewise thought it was fated to take place after the atrocities he claimed the Muslims were subjected to by the soldiers and the alleged participation of some priests in his case. His feeling of regret went deep expressing his reservations of whether the priests were friends or foes. Hamba, 67, (Appendix B12) who was fortunate to have pursued an education among the three elderly may not have strong feelings against the Christians like Babu Arag and Jikirani yet was nevertheless convinced that the war was a revolution triggered by social and political circumstances destined to happen that time. Among the elders he is the one married to a Christian.

The narratives of the middle-aged Muslim Joloanos like their Christian counterparts centered on the abuses of the government during Marcos’ dictatorship. Hadja Fatima, 47, (Appendix B13) saw how human injustices have been equally inflicted by some government soldiers and Muslim rebels beholden to Marcos that time. In her narrative “In mga Sundalo iban Maoists sibo-sibo nagmula” (The Soldiers and Rebels were mere victims) she rationalized that one of the motives of the abuses of the

fighters as greed for wealth and position. Alona, 40, (Appendix B14) who is married to an ex-seminarian was bold enough to put the blames on Marcos particularly in his alleged involvement in the Jabidah Massacre which claimed the lives of many Muslims in 1968. From another angle the conflict was seen by Muksan, 49, (Appendix B15) as having to do with the “kusog” or authority of a leader to wield power among his followers. As an insider he knew of the Muslim tradition in the wielding of battles and what it meant to them.

Among the young adult Muslim Joloanos, contrasting emotions have surfaced. While the majority expressed optimism in their outlook, one showed apathy. Abdil, 22, (Appendix B16) was a cigarette vendor whose relatives perished during the mutiny. The continuing disturbances and hard life have in all probability pushed him to indifference. From a hopeful stance, Nuraiza, 23, (Appendix B17) a BSN graduate of a Catholic school in town shared her concept of “dialogue.” She admitted that her views were enriched by her constant exposure to peace seminars and conferences. Like Hussein, 25, (see narrative Appendix B18) who was deeply involved in “pag-suwarah” (dialogue) Nuraiza believed that fighting was something that the Muslims can shun. She emphasized that at this point in time “the Muslims should be the ones to decide if they want war or peace to prevail.”

I finally sifted through the co-authors insightful narratives according to what was defined in the study as their subjective and objective realities. They were subsequently correlated to examine probable convergence or divergence in their perceptions. Detailed discussions of their subjective realities are presented below.

### **III. The Subjective Realities**

#### **A. The Psycho-Social Impact of the 1974 War**

##### **1. The Elderly**

###### *The Christian Co-Authors*

For the elderly Christians, the war in 1974 has tremendously affected their disposition in life. This is not to say that it was for the worse. They further disagreed that their judgment about the Muslims has become distorted in the aftermath of the war. They have nevertheless maintained some reservations in dealing with the Muslims because it was preferable that way. In Jolo, they claimed they can never be certain of what the Muslims are capable of doing especially after the war. Perhaps anxiety and resentment would always lurk in their minds because of what happened during the war. *“Bang sila way miyagad ha putting sin nakura nila mataud in way kiya mulahan...Mataud kanila in way nakapikil marayaw...”* (If only the Muslim fighters did not listen to the lies of their leaders many would have not suffered...Apparently many of them were misguided), declared Romeo one of the key informants.

Majority of the elderly Christians except for Petrona admitted to have become suspicious of the Muslims. They accordingly can not be blamed for having become skeptical of them. The hatred of the MNLF against the Christian military had allegedly affected the Christian civilians especially nowadays. *“Katumtuman ko pa in anak sin Christian*



*doctor piyugutan uwoh sawab way nag- dihil ransom...*” (I still recall how the son of a Christian doctor in Jolo was beheaded by the kidnappers because of the family’s refusal to give ransom...), Jose narrated.

For Petrona however, the whole incident was lamentable because the Muslims according to her were never given the chance “*way sila kiya-rihilan dapat sin parenta supaya karungugan...*” (They were never given the chance to be heard by the government). The incident should not have accordingly culminated into a full blast fighting if only they were allowed to air their grievances she insisted. She nevertheless confided of having suffered from sleeplessness and anxiety each time there was a commotion. Jose for his part described his dread of gun shots. “*Biya hollen biyutang ha barel in basag sin sinapang. Di agun ma-ubos...*” (The firings of guns were like marbles poured out into barrels...It never seemed to stop) And so when he hears gun shots nowadays he sees to it that his family is safely home. Both Romeo and Jose claimed that presently what compounded their alarm is the extortion and kidnapping incidents attributed to Muslim rebels. “They don’t choose whom to kidnap anymore. It is no longer the affluent Chinese who are victimized nowadays but anybody- rich or poor especially the Christians,” Romeo declared.

*The Muslim Co-Authors*

For majority of the Muslim elders, the occurrence of the 1974 war in Jolo did not necessarily mean the beginning of the present crisis in Sulu. The siege, they say was only one of the many conflicts not likely to end. Unlike the Christian elders, they have not focused on the war as the “cause” of their present troubles. The war and most conflicts that followed they believe, are the *effects* rather than the *causes* of the changing economic and socio-political conditions in Sulu brought about by the colonial past.

*“Bang awun dapat subay umatoh kita...supaya makawa mag-balik in katoh.”* (If necessary we should fight back... to retrieve what is rightfully ours...), Babu Arag declares. She claims to have been dispossessed of her land in Panamao one of the municipalities in Sulu shortly before the war in Jolo. And as a consequence her husband and a son perished in the mutiny. Her narratives were heavy with regret and contempt against the alleged participation of the government in depriving her of the land she considers as rightfully theirs. *“Piyag-bahagi-an nila in lupa ha 1970, in hansipak ha parenta hinangan kunoh ka-iskulan in hang-utod ha Christian military nakurah. Awun na kuno katas ha ngan sin tao ini. Sah way pang-hati namoh bang way kami piya-iig. Malugay na kami nag-u-uma ha lupa yan iban sin pag-copra namoh...”* (The land was divided between the government and a Christian military officer in 1970. With a portion of the land the government proposed to construct a school building which has not materialized until now. The other half was

accordingly registered in the name of the Christian military official. We had no idea we were to be evicted after having long occupied the land and harvested the copra from our coconuts...), narrated Babu Arag. Resentment filled her words as she further claimed, “*Hi siyo in dumungog kamoh way pangadji? Asal lawung sin manusya in Christian parenta panipu*” (Who would listen to illiterates like us? As many of our folks would say the Christian government is deceitful).

Jikirani’s experience of the upheaval on the other hand centers on the circumstances that led to the lost of his livelihood. Like most Samals he used to sustain the needs of his family from the earnings he gets out of fishing. This was bound to change when Sulu was “militarized” in the 1970’s and he was accused of killing a priest at the height of the uprising. “*Mangayu sadja sila ista kamu.. Masul bang di kami maka-rihil di kami pa-iigon...ibutang kami ha lawum baraks sundalo asu-buhon misan way pang-hati namoh..biya sin pag-patay ha pari*” (Some military would demand fish supply from us. And if we refused we were held captive inside the military stockade for interrogation about things we had no idea like the killing of the priest...), explained Jikirani. His regrets concerning his friendship with some catholic priests with whom he used to work was likewise evident in his stories, “*Way dusa sin mga bagay koh in Tuhan in saksi..Di sila ma-salvage bang way sila piya-kawa sin mga pari iban namoh ha mga sundalo...*” [My friends were innocent God knows. They would not

have been *salvaged* (murdered) if the priests with whom we were working for in the past did not conspire with the soldiers to have them arrested...], he recounted. He claimed that while he used to show only gratitude towards his Christian peers who helped him earn a decent living in the past, he is now uncertain whether they can be “friends” or “foes.” Jikirani declared.

Clearly manifested from the narratives of Babu Arag and Jikirani is their mutual contempt for having deprived of their property and livelihood. In both cases furthermore, their animosity against the Christians has explicitly surfaced and constantly been linked with the colonizers and a triad of actors (the government, the military and the church). Babu Arag claimed the government was “deceitful” in taking what was theirs and “unfair” for allowing the Christians special favors. Jikirani on the other hand is convinced of the “conspiracy” between the priests and the military for falsely accusing him of a crime during the uprising. And this has led him to confirm his earlier notions about the “Christian Bisaya” which his elders have constantly reminded him about.

Hamba for his part has not overruled the possibility of a “revolution” but for a different reason. A revolution according to him is bound to take place whenever the people feel that they are left out. *“Wakto pag-bunoh 1974, in mga Joloanos limamud ha pag-pinda sin kahawman. In pipikil nila ikarayaw ini sin manusya..”* (During the 1974

war the Joloanos thought that they should have a hand in chartering their future in whatever manner they think was best...), Hamba explained. His memory was filled with regrets rather than contempt. It somehow indicated a stage of “decadence” among the Muslim Joloanos because while some of them were “oppressed” some became the “oppressors” of their own people. Many according to him forgot what they were fighting for and got drunk with power. The Muslim Joloanos he believed were therefore partly responsible for the destruction of Jolo. This problem has continued and can only be resolved if the Muslims would resist the instigators of corruption and choose the peaceful tide of progress. Perhaps this time, Hamba stressed, the Joloanos should opt for a peaceful rather than a violent revolution.

## **2. The Middle-Aged**

### *The Christian Co-Authors*

The 1974 war likewise seemed to have triggered trauma among the middle-aged Christians that somehow affected their present mind set. Strongly evident from their fantasy themes is an attempt at analytical assessment of events that went beyond descriptions quite different from the Christian elderly. They have offered logical explanations to the series of circumstances that led to the uprising. Peter for instance, was very vocal about his “Marcos Divide and Rule Policy” as he presented a hypothesis linking Ferdinand Marcos to the Sulu conflict in 1974. He is

convinced that behind all the violent encounters between the government soldiers and the Muslim rebels, Marcos had manipulated both sides according to his whims using his dictatorial prerogatives. In the same vein, Ronald considers the war as a blunder caused by one man (Marcos) at the height of his “invincible powers.” Sharon, on the other hand, goes beyond the Marcos regime towards the colonial past in explaining the existing volatile conditions in the province. She speaks of “mistakes in the past” that have lingered and immensely contributed to the upheaval and the present state of things in Sulu.

Table 5. The Psycho-Social Trauma of the Elderly

Christian Joloano War Survivors	Muslim Joloano War Survivors
<b>Animosity and suspicion of the Muslims in general</b> <i>“Di kita masu-son bang yan in buga nato kanila pasalan in kata-uran Muslims miya-magad ha pangahagari sin nakurah bukon marayaw in pikilan”</i> (We cannot be blamed for becoming suspicious of them. Many are convinced of the philosophy of their leaders who have distorted beliefs...)- Romeo	<b>Defiance and feeling of betrayal of the Christians in general.</b> <i>“Asal dah in mga ka-maasan nag-i-yan in mga Christian Bisaya di kapangan-dulan. Ipa-sag-gaw kaw ha sundalo misan way dusa moh..”</i> (Our elders would say that even before the Christians Bisayans were not worthy of trust. They would have you arrested for a crime you did not commit...) – Jikirani
<b>Isolation. Fear of being associated with Muslims.</b> <i>“Hangkan dah in baay koh piya-ta-asan koh in walls. Misán biya-di-in din a kita ma-expose ha danger bang sila nag-bu-bunoh ha guwa..”</i> ([That’s why I had high walls constructed around my house. At least I would not be exposed to danger whenever they fight..) –Romeo	<b>Aloofness. A need to maintain distance from the Christians.</b> <i>“Hangkan dah marayaw pa in way na kita nag-a-agad kanila...Asal da way rah kita piyag-sibu-an..”</i> (That is why it is better if we keep our distance from them. We don’t have anything in common anyway...) –Babu Arag
<b>Sleeplessness and anxiety.</b> <i>“Puas bunoh yan na sadja in buga ha atay koh. Masul kahu-hunitan ako matuug early. Mag-panic ako mag-tuuy ha tiyo-tiyo commotion.,”</i> (After the war fear reigned in my heart. I have difficulty sleeping early; I would panic at the slightest commotion..) –Petrona	<b>Fear of losing one’s livelihood.</b> <i>“Yan da isab in sakit kiya-lawan ako pag-usaha pasalan sin mga suysoy nila bukon bunnal wakto pag-bunoh..”</i> (The frustration of having lost my job is also there because of false accusations.) –Jikirani
<b>Fear of fire and bullets</b> <i>“Maka-sipog sah in bunnal mag-panic na tu-od ako bang awon karungugan timbak misan malayo atawa story sin sunog”</i> (It’s a shame but the truth is I easily panic when I hear gunshots even from afar or whenever I hear stories of fire...) –Petrona	<b>Fear of being dispossessed of one’s property.</b> <i>“Misán biya-di-in din a ma-iig in sakit iban buga sin kalawa-an kaw hula piyag-u-umahan. Yan do-on in ka-unun sin anak asawa nato...”</i> (Somehow the pain and fear of being dispossessed of one’s land will never ease. That is where we get our source of living...) –Babu Arag
<b>Fear of staying out late.</b> <i>“Puas bunoh mahang na</i>	<b>Fear of being evicted from one’s dwelling.</b> <i>“Biya</i>

<i>ako gumuwa bang duum. Masul early pa yan na kami ha bay...Way nightlife namoh dii...</i> ” (After the war, I seldom venture out at night. We are usually home early..There’s no nightlife here...) -Jose	<i>sin pag-iyanon ko in buga sin kalawa-an lupa biya sin buga kala-wa-an pag-hu-hula-an. Do-on na kami piyag-anak..do-on na kami matay...</i> ” (Just like I said losing one’s land is just like losing one’s home. We were born there...We will die there..) –Babu Arag
<b>Fear of being made targets of kidnap and extortion attributed to Muslim rebels.</b> <i>“In naka-mula biha-on puas bunoh in mga kidnapping iban extortion cases. Labi na pag-guwa sin news piyo-gutan uwoh in anak sin Christian doctor way naka-rihil ransom...”</i> (After the war the kidnapping and extortion added fear among Christians especially after the beheading of the son of a Christian doctor who refused to pay the ransom...) –Jose	<b>Fear of harassments, “salvaging” (extermination) attributed to gov’t soldiers.</b> <i>“In mga sundalo way na pag-pii bang hi siyo in kugdanan sin timbak wakto pag-bunoh. Yan na in ipa-salvage kaw misan way dusa...</i> (The soldiers were mindless of who were hit by their bullets during the war. At the same time they would arrest you for no visible cause.)- Jikirani

Unlike the Christian elders however, the middle-aged group was not very specific about details concerning the kind of fear or psychological trauma they have experienced after the 1974 war. Although most of them claim to already have clear memory of the event as teenagers. There was no mention of their “fear of staying out late” or of “fear of hearing gunshots.” Suspicions of the Muslims which have generally surfaced in the narratives of the elderly were understated in a sense that no “direct references” have been made ascribing the conflict to the Muslims. A general feeling of contempt towards all forms of violence especially in the aftermath of the 1974 conflict in Jolo was evident. They described their “phobia” of being caught in the crossfire between military operations and the rebels as well as becoming victims of kidnap for ransom.

The Middle-aged Christian participants were consistent about causality as they strived to rationalize connections between past and

present circumstances. The on-going wars in Jolo they say are not isolated by any means but are interconnected one way or the other.



### *The Muslim Co-Authors*

Evident from the fantasy themes of the middle-aged are attempts at rational explanations of what the conflict represents. They are more direct rather than sentimental about the perceived causes of the event and what they implied. Like the Christian middle-aged group they have identified personalities and instances they believed have played crucial roles in the 1974 upheaval in Jolo.

Hadja Fatima for instance recognized the role of the government soldiers and the Maoists (Muslim rebels) in equally causing chaos and being used by the powers-that-be in 1974. She was raised in a family of educators. Her parents were both employed as elementary teachers then who taught her the virtue of nonviolence. It is not unusual among Muslims she emphasized to demonstrate valor if warranted. She cited the 1974 war as an example of how some folks were roused to fight back. Still, she believed there were some fighters who lusted for power that time that they were motivated to fight purely for material cause. And she was referring to some military and some Muslim rebels who allowed Marcos to use them. “Sibo-sibo sila nag mula ha parenta...” (Both sides suffered in the hands of the government...), she remarked. This was inevitable according to her since Martial law was the order of the day.

“*Nakalandu in parenta,*” (the government became abusive...), claimed Alona in the same tone as Hadja Fatima. She was

straightforward in her explanations of the circumstances behind the uprising. Unlike the two other middle-aged Muslim participants however, she is married to a Christian from Ilocos. Like the middle-aged Christians she openly attributed the atrocities surrounding the conflict particularly the *Jabidah Massacre*, to Marcos and his dictatorship. Even before the siege, she believed that military abuses against the Muslims were instigated by Marcos. Her sad experience that almost killed her Uncle 'Bapa Hael' told of how a number of their male family friends were involved in the mass murder of some Muslim trainees in Corregidor, Bataan sometime in 1968 at the height of the country's claim for Sabah." *Di natoh masu-son in Muslims taimanghud natoh bang sila imatoh ha parenta ha pag-buno sin 1974. Wakto yadto in MNLF in nakarihin kusog kanila. Sah naka-landu rah tu-od in parenta hi Marcos...*" (Our fellow Muslims cannot be blamed for having fought the government in 1974. That time it was the Moro National Liberation Front who gave them support. It gave our brothers the venue to air their grievances. The Marcos government was guilty of abusing its power...), explained Alona. Many things have changed in the aftermath of the war. Foremost according to Alona was *paranoia* a kind of pervasive attitude that developed among the community members toward any kind of commotion especially among the elderly. There are more reasons to be fearful nowadays she commented, because of power play, the members

of the *Magic Eight* (ex-MNLF and Marcos protegees) have continued wrecking havoc in the locality.

Like Hadja Fatima and Alona, Muksan's revelations focused on some circumstances and personalities behind the upheaval. From his narratives however was a note quite distinct from the stories of the two other Muslim middle-aged participants. He gave an interesting picture of the war by describing the role of the one who wields it. The *kusog* or authority of a Muslim leader to wage battle according to him would signify strength of leadership otherwise a show of weakness can mean failure not only of the leader but the followers as well. "*Bihan di katoh ha Sug. Hi siyo in makusog in barakat in dungo-gun sin mga tao.*" (That is how it is in Sulu. Whoever has the "kusog" to command followings traditionally assumes the role as the protector of his people). The 1974 war according to Muksan was reflective of the strength of leadership which Misuari used to have while he had the will of the people in his hands. But this, he maintained may no longer be true. While many Muslims still consider Misuari an important person his "kusog" as a leader may have waned because his integrity towards his people is now in question, claimed Muksan. The sentiments of the Muslim fighters went back as early as in 1974. The young and the old according to Muksan risked their lives in the war only to realize that the promises made by Misuari would never materialize. The concept of "autonomy" and the government's idea of ARMM (Autonomous Region of Muslim

Mindanao) in the first place hardly coincided with theirs. In his case for example, Muksan thought autonomy would mean greater opportunities for his people to engage in a gainful livelihood. The Muslims he commented have always been good in the barter and trade business but with the implementation of the ARMM tax ordinances according to him have made it difficult for them to earn profit. *“Subay dirihilan da isab in kaibanan sundalo supaya di makawa in mga daga-ngan namoh...”* (At times we have to dole out something to some military to stop them from confiscating our goods...), explained Muksan. This problem was compounded by the existing conflict among our people because of the trouble in the so-called war rehabilitation programs of the government, added Muksan. “Poor leadership” Muksan pointed out “was the root cause of all these confusions.” Regret was apparent from his narratives of the 1974 war and the circumstances that followed. The only redeeming aspect of Misuari’s leadership according to Muksan was that *“na-raah niya mag-bisara in parenta iban napa-hati niya in ummah pasalan sin kasigpit sin manusia ha Bangsamoro...”* (He was able to dialogue with the government; to bring to the attention of the larger Muslim community the plight of the Muslims in Mindanao...) Muksan concluded.

Table 6. The Psycho-Social Trauma of the Middle-Aged

Christian Joloano War Survivors	Muslim Joloano War Survivors
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<p><b>Fear of any commotion and violence.</b> <i>“In experience ko sin pag-sunog sin Municipal jail in naka-rihil buga ha lawum pikilan koh. Sampay biha-on in silawak sin mga piliso yan pa kiyarungugan koh”</i> (My experience of the burning of the Municipal jail haunted me till now. I can still hear the wailing of the prisoners roasting alive ...)-Sharon</p>	<p><b>Fear of any commotion and violence.</b> <i>“Di na kita mainoh-inoh bang in manusya miyu-muga na sadja puas bunoh. Mata-ud in kiya-sakitan ha pagbunoh...”</i> (Perhaps it is not surprising if many Muslims and Christians today easily become nervous when there is trouble. A lot of people suffered during the war) -Alona</p>
<p><b>Phobia of being caught in the middle of military operations against Muslim rebels.</b> <i>“Puas bunoh way na iig in buga namoh malapay ha operations sin military ha mga rebels labi na biha-on...”</i> [After the war our fears of being caught in the operations of the military against the rebels persisted especially nowadays...]. -Peter</p>	<p><b>Phobia of being caught in the military encounters with the Muslim rebels.</b> <i>“Bunnal sibo-sibo nagmula in sundalo iban Maoists sawab sila in piya-pagbuno sin parenta. Sah labi in mga manusya”</i> (It is true both soldiers and rebels were used by the government. It is the common folks who suffer the most however)-Hadja Fatima</p>
<p><b>Phobia of being involved between feuding Muslim families.</b> <i>“In naka-mula puas bunoh in political rivalry sin Muslim families iban sin Magic Eight. Mataud malapay civilians...”</i> (What worsened the situation here after the war is political rivalry of Muslim families involving the Magic Eight. Civilians are caught in the middle... -Ronald</p>	<p><b>Phobia of being caught in the crossfire of warring Muslim clans.</b> <i>“Puas bunoh naraah ha panday hi Marcos maka-ulong in mga civilians nalapay sawab sin pag-patay sin politicians ha alta atawa position ha parenta.”</i> (The war triggered by Marcos’ dictatorship caused civilians to suffer now with the fightings of politicians for power or gov’t positions.)- Alona</p>
<p><b>Phobia of becoming victims of kidnap for ransom and extortion.</b> <i>“In buga sin manusya limag-gu puas bunoh pasalan sin kidnap iban extortion. Christians katuauran in target “</i> (After the war our fears were compounded with kidnap and extortion cases. The target are mostly Christians...) -Sharon</p>	

### 3. The Young Adults

#### *The Christian Co-Authors*

Unlike the two older generations, they were not direct witnesses to the bloody encounter between the government soldiers and the Muslim rebels (MNLF) in 1974. What they know are simply fragments of stories heard from their elders about that fateful incident. Nevertheless they claimed that their present circumstances have been affected by these stories of conflict. Like a riddle they tried to figure out the mystery behind the tragedy and what it implied. The disturbances in the aftermath of the war have according to most young participants induced them to discern for themselves the “hows” and “whys” of the uprising. They believed that the answers to their predicament are found in the past. And they were convinced that the violent conflicts that have persisted today are in effect linked to the past.

Allan commented on the Muslim’s penchant for *guns, goons and gold* that is reflective of the hierarchical set up in a Muslim society. He maintained that the clannish structure used to be a *social necessity* against foreign invasion but has now become a major *problem* in the community. It is not unusual nowadays to witness warring clans cutting each other’s throat due to political rivalry according to Allan. “*Bang sila mag-bunioh mata...Biya sila iro dupang...Mata-ud in malapay... Kata-uran kanila bakas member sin Magic Eight makusog ha parenta hi Marcos sin wakto 1974...*” (When they fight, they fight like rabid

dogs...A lot of innocent bystanders get hurt. Most of them used to be members of the “Magic Eight” favored by Marcos during his administration in 1974...), Allan confided. He looked at the present conflicts in Sulu as reminiscent of the past. The Marcos’ government he thought engineered the ghost of abuses by most members of the Magic Eight. And this has continued to haunt the community. The unfairness of the situation according to him only elicited contempt on the part of innocent victims.

On the same note Eric remarked on the Muslim’s proclivity for self-aggrandizement mostly as a result of the powers they have amassed from the previous government. Today, Eric observed some local officials mostly MNLF members call the shots since they owned most of the major businesses in town. The military on the other hand, Eric commented has continued playing the role of a dummy by accomplishing some dirty jobs for wealthy politicians. Some military operations have even injured innocent civilians conveniently tagged as MNLF. He claimed to have first-hand knowledge of the information as a Red Cross volunteer assigned in rescue teams during encounters. *“Mata-ud in ma-inoh-inoh bang mayta awon civilians matimbak misan bukon member sin MNLF... naka-ingat ako sawab yan ako ha rescue team sin Red Cross”* (Many have wondered why some civilians caught in the crossfire were not even members of the MNLF...I personally know it because I am with the Red Cross rescue team), explained Eric. After all

is said and done “who is at fault now?” asked Eric. Both sides appeared to have caused irreparable damage to the community, he observed. Those who were mostly victimized were the poor Muslim fisherfolks and farmers, revealed Eric.

Mary Jane narrated of the gory kidnap for ransom incidents which for her were triggered by ceaseless battles. Poverty incidence in Sulu, she stressed became more alarming after the 1974 war. She believed that a number of desperate people dispossessed of their landholdings and livelihood in the province have resorted to all forms of violence for sustenance. Wariness and trepidation shadowed her narratives. *“Asal di ma-iig in buga ha lawum atay sin mga Christians sawab kami in masun victims sin kidnapping. Ampa tiyu-tiyo rah kami di ha Jolo, hi siyo in di muga pugutan uwoh?”* (We can’t help but be apprehensive because most kidnap victims here in Jolo were Christians...And we are very few here... Who wouldn’t be fearful of having his head chopped?), declared Mary Jane. She was convinced that the 1974 war and the on-going conflicts have been devoid of any religious significance. But the terrorist activities attributed to Muslim bandits she observed seemed to be victimizing Christians thus making it appear like a religious conflict. *“Hangkan dah in kami mga Christians masul di na sadja mag-kaiba di ha Jolo...”* (That is why Christians like us keep a low profile here in Jolo most of the time), she concluded.



Incessant conflicts in Jolo have not immuned their sensibilities and made them totally indifferent to their present predicament maintained Eric. His training as a Red Cross volunteer taught him toughness. *“Asal way mapinda dii ha Sug bang in kita dii ma-involve ha pag-solve sin problems nato. Way maka-wa nato bang mag-complain sadja kitah iban lumawag tao naka-sala. In local government, mga sundalo in dahun nato mag-ison-ison labi na in mga taimanghud Muslims nato. Subay in sila iban kitah nag-a-agad ha pag-propose parakala against extortion iban kidnapping... ikarayaw sin Jolo... iigon nato in buga ha atay nato...”* [Nothing constructive can happen to Sulu unless we become directly involve in solving our problems. There’s nothing we can get out of destructive criticisms and fault-finding. We must consult with local government agencies, the military and our Muslim counterparts on how to confront our problems. As partners we should see to it that local ordinances and stricter penalty against extortionists and kidnappers are implemented. Let us erase fear in our hearts...), Eric emphasized. Allan furthermore talked of the immediacy of promoting the law against illegal possession of firearms. The *gun ban* has never been given full meaning by the local police force, he noted. With the Joloanos’ collective action against these illegal activities the growing tension in the locality can somehow be abated, Allan stressed.

*The Muslim Co-Authors*

Two extreme emotions have generally surfaced from the fantasy themes of the young Muslim co-authors. While majority showed concern and open-mindedness, a cigarette vendor displayed apathy. He recounted stories of the 1974 siege that killed his grandparents then his parents. Like the Christian young participants they did not have a first-hand experience of the mutiny yet they claimed to be survivors as much as the older ones by virtue of their continued exposure to conflicts.

*“Di ha Jolo way na buga sin mga miskin biya kamoh ha pag-patay. Asal dah bang wakto mo na, matay rah kaw...”* (Here in Jolo, killing no longer scare poor people like us. Anyhow, if it is your time to die...you just have to go...), stated Abdil in a matter-of-fact tone. His parents perished in the 1974 siege trapped in their small coffeeshop near the market after a mortar exploded. Presently, he claimed he couldn't care less if big people fight for power *“na-sa-sag-gaw sadja kitah ha gi-tungan bunoh sin tao dakula...misan bukon kalo nato...Masul in miskin in mag-mula bang matay...way mag-paka-on sin asawa iban anak...”* (We're often caught in the crossfire between warring rich people even if it's not our fight. It is the poor fellow who suffers if he gets hit...nobody gets to feed the family...), revealed Abdil. He has been trying to sustain two families out of selling cigarettes and sometimes “shabu.” His indifference is thus occasioned by such circumstances. *“Amoh ra in tao makusog in mag-baya bang mag-bunoh. In kita ini na-sa-sag-gaw sadja ha tunga..”* (The choice to fight is only for the strong and not for

the weak. The poor like us are simply caught in the crossfire...), declared Abdil.

Nur-aiza's knowledge of the war mirrored intense pain and regret for "*what could have been*" among her own people. She furthermore talked of *what "ought to be"* in the light of the existing predicament the Joloanos are facing. She affirmed that the 1974 war had been triggered by wrong beliefs which led the government and the Muslim rebels to an actual combat. What both parties failed to do was to consider settling amicably before having taken the drastic move that killed innocent victims, she asserted. Her concept of a "dialogue" has been honed by her constant involvement in peace seminars at the Notre Dame of Jolo College (NDJC) where she finished her BSN. The NDJC-JPIC (Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation)-Peace Center has been actively engaged in peace advocacy in the community. She believed that the present times call for Joloanos to take the matter of war into their own hands. "*Biha-on subay kita na in mag-baya bang mag-bunoh atawa mag-sulot...In pag-bunoh bukon biya sin kamatay sin tao in Tuhan in mag-baya. Asal bang tao in mag-baya siya rah in maka-hundong*" (At this point in time, we should decide whether we want war or peace... War is not like death that the creator wills. It is willed by men and therefore something that they can prevent), explained Nuraiza.

Parallel to Nuraiza's tone of diplomacy, Hussein displayed a tact that bespoke of unusual maturity for a teenager of his age. His narratives

were tempered with moral convictions and balanced with reasons. He spoke of the misconceptions that many of his own people- the Muslims have towards war. It is false pride according to him if some Muslims would pretend to fight for their people yet are in actuality blinded with power. The true “maratabat” (pride) of a Muslim warrior is not necessarily equated with his warring skills. It is the intention of the Muslim to avoid causing another man’s injury that makes him a noble warrior. For Hussein maintained, it is the *jihad* (struggle) against oneself to refrain from evil which makes *jihad* the greatest struggle. It was a mistake for some people, Christians and Muslims alike to think that the siege in 1974 was a form of jihad. For jihad he says, is a struggle to *advocate peace* by spreading the teachings of the Holy Qur’an and the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). There can only be jihad as a *defensive war* if Muslims are openly persecuted and stopped from exercising Islam. “*Bukon in pag-bunoh in mak-pahati ha tao taimanghud nato h bang unoh in pipikil moh. “Subay dahon nato h mag-suwarah in manusya supaya kita kaha-tihan. Iban marayaw rah isab in kita maka-hati bang unoh in pipikil nila ha pag-suwarah”* (Fighting should not be resorted to all the time to make people understand. It is good to be able to make them listen through dialogues). Like Nuraiza, Hussein is deeply committed in promoting peace among diverse peoples in the community through *pag-suwarah* (dialogues). He is an active member of the *Jihad-al-Akhbar*, a non-government Muslim religious organization and

pursuing a degree in Islamic Studies at the Jolo-MSU (Mindanao State University). The terrors of the 1974 war and the on-going conflicts used to fill him with a *sense of loss* that would have presently consumed him if not for his faith. Now, he feels challenged with the prospect of somehow being able to share the constructive concept of *suwarah* (dialogue) for a better Jolo.

Table 7. The Psycho-Social Trauma of the Young Adults

Christian Joloano War Survivors	Muslim Joloano War Survivors
<p><b>Hatred towards senseless killings; violence; graft and corruption.</b> <i>“As a Red Cross volunteer yan in dugal ha atay koh sin bunoh 1974 sawab mataud in miyatay. Bihaon in karupangan sin kata-uran nakurah nag-paragan hula nakarihil sakit ha दौरा. Ampa na ako mag-asubo hi siyo in taga sala?”</i> (As a Red Cross volunteer the 1974 war filled me with loathing because of senseless killings of innocent civilians. The corruptions of some inefficient leaders in our community nowadays have aggravated our misery. I asked myself <b>who’s at fault now?</b>) –Eric</p>	<p><b>Contempt toward sympathizers of violence and abusive acts.</b> <i>“Biya-di-in kita maka-pikil sin kalinaw bang nag-bubunoh na sadja in mga tao nasihilaw ha alta? Pag-bunoh na sadja in pipikil sin manusia. Way na naka-pikil sin <b>pag-suwara</b>.”</i> [How can we live peacefully when there is always warring among our people blinded by wealth. It seemed hard for us to think that it is alright not to fight. Most of us failed to consider that <b>dialogue</b> is an option.] –Hussein</p>
<p><b>Desperation.</b> <i>“Bang bistahon maka-ulong in Christians dii ha दौरा labi na puas bunoh 1974. Way na ma-iig in susa ha pikilan namoh sawab bang awon kidnap-pon kita masul in target...Yan in anak usog sin Christian doctor piyugutan uwoh sawab way ransom kiya-rihil...”</i> (We have become more desperate after the 1974 war. <b>Despair</b> filled our thoughts with kidnapping incidents victimizing mostly Christians. An example was the beheaded son of a Christian doctor who failed to give ransom) –Marie Jane</p>	<p><b>Apathy.</b> <i>“Dii ha Sug way na buga ha lawum atay sin mga miskin biya katoh.. bang wakto na.. matay dah kita...Nasa-sagaw sadja kita ha kalo sin mga tao dakula...bang nag-ka-kalo sila malapay kita misan bukon kalo natoh...”</i> (Here in Sulu <b>fear no longer fills the hearts of poor people</b> like us. If it is your time to die...then you just have to go...We are always caught in the crossfire of wealthy people ...) –Abdil</p>

## B. Perceived Images of the “The Other” Culture as War Survivors

The study attempted to describe the perceived images of “the other” culture for purposes of explaining possible transitions in the co-authors’ perceptions across age. The descriptions given for each age category were general rather than exclusive.

A “shift” for instance generally characterized the elderly’s perceived images of “the other” culture as they recounted pleasant relations that deteriorated during the upheaval and thereafter. Unlike the younger war survivors they have co-existed with “the other” culture for quite some time

allowing them to make comparisons of their past and present relations. From the stories of most elderly co-authors except for the two who are married to “the other” culture echoes of sentiments from the past were evident. And from their admission these sentiments have in one way or another affected their social relations.

“Impartiality” or a tendency to look into the possible explanation of the war generally characterized the attitude of the middle-aged. Their portrayal of the images of “the other” culture were not as laden with emotions as that of the elderly but more prudent and tempered with reasons. Majority of them considered “the other” culture victims as much as they.

The young adults were by far the boldest among the co-authors. But their opinions of “the other” culture have been generally characterized by a “split.” The majority showed empathy on one extreme end while a few exhibited apathy and desperation on the other. Their audacity spoke of idealism and aggressiveness of the youth.

## **1. The Elderly**

### *The Christian Co-Authors*

As earlier mentioned “shifts” in the elderly perceptions concerning images of the Muslims were noted.

Jose who spent his lifetime in Jolo recalled the transformation in the attitude of the Muslims. This was evident immediately prior to the war and thereafter, he claimed. He was impressed by the *friendliness* of

the Samals in the 1950s. They used to deliver fresh fish in his place while some folks from the gimba (upland) would courteously wave their hands on their way home saying, "*lumabay pa kami*" (we are passing through). He described Jolo as a peaceful haven where danger seemed far-fetched for anyone. He sauntered the night market with his classmates from the Notre Dame College of Jolo (NDJC) or watched Fernando Poe Jr. (FPJ) movies leaving only when the screen would flash *the end*. Together with some priests, they heard mass in the remote municipality of Patikul upon invitation of government soldiers. A picture of ambiance and contentment among the Joloanos filled his recollection.

Unpleasant images of the Muslims however surfaced in the 1970s. Violent riots filled the streets where Muslim folks would hurl stones at the Christians during church processions. The priests would refrain from wearing their *sutana* for fear of assassination. Their suspicions of the Muslims have prevailed thereafter Jose confessed.

Romeo for his part has always been consistent with his unflattering notions about the Muslims of Jolo. Even before the war he isolated his family from the Muslims. "*Mata-ud bagay ko dayahan Muslims businessmen, sah di ako lumamud business kanila malapay kita sin kalo nila...Hilo wala sadja*" (I have lots of rich Muslim friends engaged in business. But I don't do business with them; they are a *troublesome* lot), he admitted. For this assertion, his wife Rizalina a Jolo



bred Christian would rebuke him “*Way kaw naka-hati adat sin mga Taosug..*” (You don’t really understand the culture of the Taosug...). Many of the Muslims according to Romeo never wanted to pursue a career in the 1950s preferring to be in the barter and trading business because it was an ‘easy way’ to make money and this included *smuggling*. When the war broke in 1974, he claimed that most Muslim fighters were misled because of the *bandwagon* mentality. “They joined the mutiny without having an idea what for,” he pointed out. After the 1974 war, he admitted of having become more uncertain of what the Muslims are capable of doing especially with violent conflicts going on and the kidnapping incidents.

Petrona is married to a Muslim. Like Jose she is a native of Jolo whose parents were migrant farmers from Luzon. Her parents she recounted were partly responsible for her gory visions of a Muslim as a *sabil-illah* (juramentado) who is notorious for running wild and staging frenzied killings in public. Her marriage, it would seem tempered her earlier impressions of the Muslims. She was smitten by the “fierce looks and valiant ways” of her husband. She is convinced that Muslims by nature are stubborn and would not hesitate to give anybody “*an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth*” if the occasion warrants. For her the mutiny in 1974 reflected the indignation and besmirched pride of the Muslims due to government neglect. “The military abuses inflicted on them were pejorative of their dignity and they were provoked to

retaliate. It was a “desperate move on their part to be taken seriously” by the government,” maintained Petrona.

### *The Muslim Co-Authors*

Their narratives were heavy with emotions and so were their portrayal of the images of the Christian Joloanos. Their notions of the ‘hows’ and the ‘whys’ of the 1974 upheaval mostly centered on the involvement of a ‘triad’ (the government, its alter-ego-the military and to some extent the Catholic Church) in their stories. Except for Hamba, the rest of the elderly Muslim participants generally considered ‘the triad’ allies of the Christians and oppressors of the Muslims since colonial rule. Babu Arag and Jikirani’s versions of the siege were directly linked with their personal sentiments against the government, the military and the church. In a prudent and less sentimental tone Hamba described the images projected by the Christians as well as the Muslims in the mutiny

*“Hi-siyo in dumungog ha way pangadji biya kamo ini? Asal pag-  
iyanon sin kama-asan in parenta panipu. In dirihilan sadja tabang in  
taga-pangadji Christians..Ampa in mga Muslims nakalamud kanila  
diyu-dupang nila...”* (Who would listen to illiterates like us? Our elders  
say the government is *deceitful*. It only favors the educated  
Christians...While the Muslims among them are being manipulated...),  
explained Babu Arag. She was allegedly dispossessed of her land in

Panamao municipality by a Christian military official in cahoots with the local government shortly before the siege. “*Way maka-hundong sin pag-bunoh...Asal awun dapat natoh umatoh..*” (The war was inevitable. It was necessary for us to fight back...), asserted Babu Arag.

“*Nagtabang-tabang in mga pari iban mga sundalo supaya ma-jail kami...*” (The priests and the soldiers conspired to have us arrested), narrated Jikirani. His theory was based on some earlier circumstances that led him to believe this was so. He and some of his fishing colleagues used to work on a livelihood project with some priests in town. When the war broke in 1974 the project folded up and a priest they knew was simultaneously gunned down. He, together with some of his friends was made a suspect. “*Way sala in mga bagay ko in Tuhan in saksi. Di sila ma-salvage bang way sila piya-pick up sin pari iban namoh ha mga sundalo...Asal mapanday di kapangan-dulan in mga Christian bisaya misan tagna pag-iyannun sin mga ka-ma-asan...*” (My friends were innocent God knows...They would not have been “salvaged” (liquidated) if the priests with whom we used to work for did not have us arrested by the soldiers...the Christian Bisayas are not worthy of trust...), confessed Jikirani. He was lucky to have evaded arrest but failed to recover the loss of his earnings as a fisherman even now.

*An act of defiance against oppression* is what the 1974 war was all about argued Hamba. The climate of oppression was contagious that

time and it created a fertile ground for anyone to aggrandize himself, he observed. It signified *decadence* among some ambitious Muslims who became the *oppressors* of their own people. This he learned from experience when he was interrogated by the military upon instigation of some of his co-workers for his alleged collaboration with the enemies (Maoists) and illegal possession of firearms that resulted to his dismissal from office. He believed that the seed of corruption during the war was sown by some instigators through the military and some Muslim fighters. Both Christians and Muslims in Jolo to his mind played a part in the war scenario. It was *desire for power* that eventually motivated the oppressors regardless of faith to have engaged in corruption. His personal encounters with the Christians even before he returned to Jolo to practice his law profession have been pleasant. *“In kata-uran kaki-lahan ko Christians marayaw nakurah... Misan in Christian asawa ko mata-ud da in kiya-hindo kako. Sila in naka-rihil inspiration kako ha pag-iskul ko. In naka-tabang pag-improve sin Jolo ha 1960s mga Christians in kata-uran.”* (Many Christians I know are *good leaders and mentors*. In fact my Christian wife has taught me a lot about her culture. They have inspired me in my pursuit of a profession. A number of Christians in Jolo contributed to its development especially in the 1960s. They are *civic-minded* individuals), declared Hamba. The desire to cooperate between Christians and Muslims for Jolo’s improvement is strong. But the recent kidnapping and extortion cases have complicated

the rapport between them. “What Joloanos need at present is strong partnership to be able to glide towards a greater ocean of progress,” stressed Hamba.

Table 8. The Perceptions of the Elderly

<b>Christian Joloano War Survivors Towards the Muslims (General Perceptions)</b>	<b>Muslim Joloano War Survivors Towards the Christians (General Perceptions)</b>
<p><i>Before the war</i></p> <p><b>Hardworking folks</b>  <i>“Tagna in mga Samal kakilahan koh dahan ako ista ha baay...In mga tao gimba kumambay bang sila lumabay ha baay namoh sin duum muwi na...”</i> [Before some of my Samal friends used to bring me fresh catch from the sea... Hardworking market vendors from the upland would pass by my place at night after a long day’s work on their way home...] –Jose</p> <p><b>Amiable people</b>  <i>“In mga Muslims wakto yadto marayaw tu-od in pag-tagad ha mga Christians timatabang sila ha pag-dayaw sin da-ira...naghihinang sila ha mga Christians bang bukon ha baay ha office...”</i> [The Muslims that time had an amiable relations with the Christians. They assisted the Christians in improving the town...A few worked with the Christian employers either as household help or in the office...] – Petrona</p> <p><b>Courteous fellows</b>  <i>“In mga tao gimba lumabay ha bay suung nila muwi pa ta-as ampa na-ubos na in dagangan ha taboo kumambay sin lima nila kamoh...umiyan, lumabay pa kami...”</i> [folks from the upland would pass by our place on their way home after selling their products in the maket would wave their hands and say...we are passing through...] –Jose</p>	<p><i>Before the war</i></p> <p><b>Benevolent providers</b>  <i>“Mata-ud in kiya-tabang sin mga pari ha pag-usaha namoh...Limagu in usaha namoh ha panagat...marayaw in pag-usaha namoh iban sin mga bagay koh ha simbahan sin way pa nag-bu-bunoh 1974...”</i> [The priests gave a lot of assistance to our livelihood...Our fishing business expanded... We had a good working relation with my friends from the church before the 1974 war...] –Jikirani</p> <p><b>Excellent leaders</b>  <i>“In kata-uran Christian leaders bagay koh in naka-rihil inspiration kakoh ha pag-talos sin pag-school ko.. Marayaw sila example ha mga manusya Muslims sawab sila in nakat-tabang improvements ha Sug..”</i> [A number of my Christian friends who were noted leaders provided me the inspiration to finish schooling...They were good examples to the Muslims because they assisted in initiating improvements in Sulu...] –Hamba</p> <p><b>Good partners</b>  <i>“In mga Christians iban sin mga Muslim manusya in nag-agad ha pag improve sin Sug ha mga infrastructure projects kiya-butang sin wakto yadto...Biya sin school buildings, daan, electricity iban tubig...”</i> [The Christians were in hand in hand with the Muslims in implementing infrastructure projects in Sulu like school buildings, roads, electricity and water system that time...] – Hamba</p>

Table 8 (Cont.). The Perceptions of the Elderly

<b>Christian Joloano War Survivors Towards the Muslims (General Perceptions)</b>	<b>Muslim Joloano War Survivors Towards the Christians (General Perceptions)</b>
<p><i>After the war</i></p> <p><b>Victims of their own ‘misguided beliefs’</b>  <i>“In mga Muslims imatoh ha pag-bunoh hang-karayii rah nag-kahagad ha mga ison-ison sin mga nakurah nila...Asal misan tagna awam in kata-uran Muslim manusya...”</i> [The Muslims who joined the siege were easily misled by their leaders. Even before most of them were naïve ..]  - Romeo</p> <p><b>Ambitious...insolent</b>  <i>“Nag-agaw sin pag-paraagan hula in kata-uran Muslim nakurah nakalamud ha pag-bunoh iban sin parenta...Mata-ud kanila in nag-aboh iban nasilaw ha alta...”</i> Most Muslim leaders who were involved in the mutiny struggled for supremacy over the land against the government. Many of them became insolent and ambitious...]- Jose</p> <p><b>Conspirators of rebel brutalities</b>  <i>“In manusya Muslim asal miya-magad ha kaha-gari sin mga MNLF. Hangkan dah in kata-uran Muslim civilians masul kaki-ta-an ha mga ‘kaddai’ dimu-dungog ha mga suysoy wakto na kunoh sin pag-jihad...”</i> [The Muslim folks are usually inclined to believe in the teachings of the MNLF. That is why most of them are seen in the ‘kaddais’ (coffeshops) listening attentively to stories advocating a ‘jihad’ (religious war).</p>	<p><i>After the war</i></p> <p><b>Manipulative...</b>  <i>“Asal panipu in parenta misan tagna...biya sin naka-una Kastila iban Milikan in dirihilan tabang iban kasañang mga tao biya dah kanila awon pangadji biya sin mga Christians...In mga Muslims nakalamud kanila diyo-dupang dah...”</i> [The government has always been deceitful. Like the Spaniards and the Americans it favors only people of their own kind like the educated Christians. The Muslims among them are only manipulated...] –Babu Arag</p> <p><b>Arrogant... dictators</b>  <i>“Asal abuhan in manusya Christians labi na in sundalo. Ma-isog sadja bang nag-daraa sinapang nila...pupokon nila in mga tao gimba bang sumambong kanila..bang di mag-kaiba timbakon na sadja...”</i> [The Christians have always been arrogant especially the soldiers. They only show bravery because they had rifles... The soldiers would hit the tao gimba (upland folks) with the butt of their guns if the latter answers back if not they would simply be shot...] –Babu Arag</p> <p><b>Sympathizers of military atrocities</b>  <i>“Asal in Tuhan in naka-ingat way dusa sin mga bagay koh ha pag-patay. Di sila ma-salvage bang in mga pari iban namoh tagna way kami piya-kawa ha sundalo...Marayaw naka-pagoy ako...”</i> [God knows my friends were innocent of the killing. They would not have been salvaged (exterminated) if the priests with whom we used to work did not have us arrested. I was lucky to have escaped..] – Jikirani</p>

## 2. The Middle-Aged

### *The Christian Co-Authors*

Evident from the *fantasy themes* of the Christian middle-aged group was an attempt at *impartiality*. Like the elderly Christians their personal accounts may have suggested intense reactions towards the gory incidents during the siege but the portrayal of images played by “the other” culture as co-survivors of war have been low-keyed.

For Peter, the conflict in 1974 never signified anything religious. He claimed to have noticed signs of hostility between the Muslims and Christians only when he was told later by his parents to refrain from going out with Bapa Hassan and associating with his Muslim friends. His parents are Christian Leyteños who migrated to Jolo in the 1960s. The escalating news of the Maoists attack coupled with the warrantless arrest and interrogation of Muslim suspects by the military set the whole town in turmoil. Bapa Hassan was an endearing fellow who used to drive him to Notre Dame elementary school. He would often bring him to the *kaddai* (eatery) for his favorite *satti* (Muslim special beef curry). On the eve of the siege he was arrested by the soldiers and found mutilated in the bushes. “*Sibo-sibo kita kiya-skitan sin pag-bunoh Muslims iban Christians. Katum-tuman ko bang biya di-in in manusia dima-gan supaya di kugdanan sin timbak ha naval iban air raids,*” (Both Muslims and Christians were victims of the 1974



siege. I remember how we ran for cover to evade firings from the naval and air raids), he recalled. His story of the “big fire” told of how the Maoists (rebels) rescued them from burning inside the Notre Dame chapel. Peter thought the war was master-minded by Marcos. It worked for some Muslims rebels- when the Magic Eight broke away from the MNLF and was enticed by the dictator. Presently he explained the whole thing is repeating itself. “The war would become a vicious cycle if we allow unscrupulous people to manipulate us. There are some people who ironically would not like the war to end,” Peter pointed out.

Closely attuned with Peter’s concept of the 1974 siege is Ronald’s. He blamed Marcos for the war which he described as a serious blunder that caused the Joloanos to suffer until now. The conflict signaled the culmination of some important things in his life. His parents separated leaving with their maternal grandparents after the war. To make matters worst, they became victims of land grabbing incidents which proliferated those days. *“Asal way pa nag-bubunoh mata-ud matimbak nag-u-uma misan bukon Maoists supaya makawa in lupa nila. Mabuga na mag-balik ha gimba in manusya..In lupa piyag-u-umahan nila sundalo na-in mag-harvest mga tanom nila.”* (Even before the 1974 siege, most farmers tilling their lands were killed even when they were not rebels. Fear prevented the folks from returning to their lands. The soldiers were the ones harvesting the crops), revealed Ronald. Some ambitious members of the Magic Eight took advantage of the crisis.

*“Marayaw sukod sin kaibanan Magic Eight, piyag-bahagi-an nila in alta sin mga tao wakto pag-buno,”* (Some Magic Eight members were fortunate to have divided the soils of the war among themselves), he added.

Sharon is the only female from among the Christian middle-aged participants. Like Ronald and Peter, she was born in Jolo and was in the elementary grade when the war broke. Her father who came to Jolo in 1960 with a Christian wife from Zambales used to be a minister at the UCCP (United Church of Christians in Philippines) where she finished her primary education. Her fondness with the Samals was also brought about by her father's friendship with them. From such stories she portrayed the Samals as gentle folks. The advent of the 1974 conflict was a blow that devastated not only the Samals but the upland farmers in terms of livelihood, claimed Sharon. It is the illiterate and poor Muslims today who have become pathetic for they have little chances of winning, observed Sharon. The Samals are industrious folks who Sharon described would prefer *to fish rather than to fight*. But with the presence of big fishing boats owned by some ex-rebels (Magic Eight) after the war, the Samals were deprived of their income. The crisis that Jolo is facing today Sharon believed is triggered by mistakes from the past. The colonial invaders may have brought economic progress in Sulu but in its wake created a *psychological divide* among the people, Sharon explained. Like Peter and Ronald, she accused Marcos for capitalizing

on this so-called psychological divide by inciting conflicts between Muslims and Christians.

### *The Muslim Co-Authors*

Like the middle-aged Christians the middle-aged Muslim participants have mostly shown attempts at neutrality in describing images of ‘the other’ culture. Their perceptions may be partly influenced by some traditional beliefs but were essentially drawn from actual associations they have with the Christian Joloanos.

She is now occupying an important position with the local school district as a supervisor. Hadja Fatima grew up in a family whose notion of war is seen as part of the local norms. But this belief according to her has always been taken by her family in the positive light in the sense that she believed battles for the Muslims are only fought for a noble cause. *“Bukon marayaw in pasalan sin pag-bunoh sin 1974. Na-raah in kata-uran manusya sin bisara way dapat sin kaibanan Muslim iban Christian nakurah kiyarihilan kasañang hi Marcos...Hangkan dah sibo-sibo kita nyo nag-mula,”* (The motive behind the 1974 war was far from noble. Many of the rebels and soldiers who fought were deceived by the lies of some Muslim and Christian leaders who benefited from Marcos. That is why we all suffered), she explained.

She married a Christian despite vehement refusal of her highly traditional family. And to make things worse he was no ordinary man,

he was about to take his vow as a priest when they met. Alona's husband used to be a seminarian and her college mentor in philosophy. But as the saying goes, "love knows no bounds" and so she married him for his determination and perseverance. She is a living witness to the atrocities of some Christian soldiers during the 1974 mutiny and condemned Marcos for his abuses. She refused to hide her contempt for the military not because they are Christians but because they allowed themselves to become *instruments* to the perpetuation of Marcos' dirty work. "*Nakalandu in parenta hi Marcos,*" (Marcos' government became abusive), she maintained. Convinced that the war was never religious, she thought it was Marcos who made it appear like one beginning with the *Jabidah Massacre* in 1968. "*Wakto pag-bunoh 1974 in Christians iban Muslims kiya-sakitan sibi-sibo sin timbak daying ha navy iban sikatuna..Hiyo siyo in maka-pikil in nag-bunoh Christians iban Muslims?*" (During the 1974 war both Christians and Muslims were victims of firings coming from the navy "sikatuna" or war tanks... Who would even think that the war was between the Christians and the Muslims?), she added.

In a similar tone, Muksan described the Christian Joloanos as victims in the tragic incident of 1974 as much as the Muslim Joloanos. "*Asal di mag-kayba in mga Christians di ha Sug misan tagna pa sawab tiyo-tiyo da sila.... Masul in mag-hilo-wala di ha da-ira mga Muslims*" (The Christians here in Sulu have always kept a low profile.

Those who get involve in the skirmishes here in town are mostly Muslims). Both Muslims and Christians have not recovered in the aftermath of the siege, Muksan revealed- not even with the TRIPOLI and the ARMM. Tension even escalated after the effort of the government to rehabilitate Sulu. Its so-called war rehabilitation programs were mismanaged by some inefficient Muslim leaders whose “kusog” (strength) as a result of poor leadership has already waned among the people, claimed Muksan.

Table 9. The Perceptions of the Middle-Aged

Christian Joloano War Survivors Towards the Muslims (General Perceptions)	Muslim Jolaono War Survivors Towards the Christians (General Perceptions)
<b>The Muslims (rebels) would not have fought if they were not provoked.</b> ( <i>In kaibanan Muslim rebels imatoh sawab sin mga kangii-an nahinang kanila.</i> ) -Sharon	<b>We were all victims of Marcos deceit especially the soldiers and some Muslim fighters who wanted fame and power at the expense of the people.</b> ( <i>Narupang kita katan hi Marcos labi na in sundalo iban rebels nagbaya alta misan pa nahilo in manusya</i> )- Hadja Fatima
<b>Some Muslims (rebels) were oppressed and misled by the powers that be (Marcos) because they were weak.</b> Others were manipulated because they wanted power. ( <i>Nadupang hi Marcos in manusya miyagad ha bunoh...In kaibanan naraah ha pag-hilo-wala sawab nag-baya da isab kasañang ha baran nila.</i> ) –Peter	<b>Some Christians like Marcos (leaders and military) took advantage of the Muslims because they had the means.</b> ( <i>Yan in mga Christian nakurah biya hi Marcos iban mga sundalo nakahinang karupangan ha manusya Muslims sawab sila in yan ha parent.</i> ) -Alona
<b>The Muslims (civilians) were victims in the atrocities of the conflict as much as the Christians (civilians) because of the blunder committed by one man- Marcos.</b> ( <i>In mga Muslims iban Christians kiya-sakitan sibo-sibo sawab sin karupangan sin hambuok tao- hi Marcos.</i> ) -Ronald	<b>The Christians (civilians) were as much victims as the Muslims (civilians) in the mutiny because of ambitious leaders and their misused power.</b> ( <i>Way bida in nalapay ha pag-bunoh. Christians iban Muslims sibo-sibo ha दौरा in kiya-sigpitan wakto yadto sawab naraah na sin karupangan sin nakurah.</i> ) –Muksan

### 3. The Young Adults

#### *The Christian Co-Authors*

The youthful stories were direct and candid rather than patronizing. Their descriptions of the images of the Muslim Joloanos were mostly shaped by their personal assessment of the present circumstances. And stories of war in the past hardly manifested strong impressions against their Muslim counterparts.

Eric, a Red Cross volunteer who at a young age has been exposed to violent encounters between the military and Muslim rebels now in Jolo thought that the 1974 siege implied greed for power on both

the side of some Christians and Muslims. With Marcos setting the precedence in the 1970s, the government through some Christian officials and the military, he believed are partly to blame for the continued destruction of Jolo. "Who's at fault now?" wondered Eric when both parties seemed guilty of causing irreparable damage to the people. There is a direct link between the past and the present, he maintained. If in the past there were abuses committed by some soldiers, today government sanctioned military operations have continued to injure innocent civilians. In the same manner some Muslim rebels can hardly be considered war victims when they are the ones terrorizing their own people nowadays in their bid for positions. From being the fearful bystanders in the 1974 siege, today the innocent ordinary Muslim civilians caught in the quagmire have become hopelessly confused, explained Eric. On the other hand, a number of young Muslim Joloanos like Eric who are volunteers in the Red Cross service today are described by him as pro-active, committed public servants, and forward-looking.

Guns, goons and gold are the three G's that sustained powerful Muslims in their fight for more power especially after the war in 1974. Like Eric, Allan hardly considered this breed of Muslims with the three G's in any way aggrieved by the present state of affairs in Jolo much less suffered from the 1974 war. On the contrary, Allan thought these people are the ones causing disturbances in the locality each time they

slay one another. Those who suffered the brunt are the ordinary civilians both Christians and Muslims. Apathetic is how Allan would describe the poor Muslim civilians often caught in the crossfire. In most cases, ordinary Muslim civilians experience strapping bullets at least once a month especially in Havena and Asturias barangays, the favorite battleground of warring clans observed Allan. Unlike some Christian and rich Muslim residents these poor people do not have foxholes where they can hide. Apparently according to Allan their indifference is born out of such harsh circumstances. The more economically stable Muslim Joloanos who have been witnesses to the violent conflicts in town are of two types noted Allan, those *who mind their own business* and those *who mind other's business*. The few professional and religiously inclined Muslims of Jolo would confine their activities to their profession or matters of religion therefore maintaining a low profile. They belong to the first type. The more aggressive ones are neither career-oriented nor religious in the literal sense. But because they are influential they are often involved in the tug-of-war for political positions inciting others to join their cause. They fall under the second category.

#### *The Muslim Co-Authors*

Their fantasy themes of the 1974 war and the present conflicts have mirrored unusual maturity and audacity coming from the youngest generation of participants. Their attitude towards the Christian Joloanos



bespeaks of respect and admiration except for one whose narrative strongly suggested apathy. Like the young adult Christians the optimism of most of the young adult Muslim participants is visibly etched in their stories of “the other” culture.

The most vocal of the three key informants was a young lady whose candidness is rare among Muslim teenagers of her age. *“Mag sarang-sukol ako ha mga bagay ko ha Notre Dame JPIC-Peace Center sila in naka-rihil inspiration kako. Yan in peace seminars atawa livelihood programs ha mga tao. In peace advocacy naka-rihil tu-od kalinaw ha pikilan pasalan kara-yawan sin reconciliation (pag-sulot). In Muslims iban Christians way rah tu-od piyag-bid-da-an in agama Islam iban Chritian hangka-ugat rah kita nyo katan.. Di ha peace center ko kiya-kita-an bang biya-di-in in dayaw sin mga Christians”* (I am grateful to my colleagues at the Notre Dame JPIC-Peace Center. They have inspired me with the peace seminars and livelihood programs we initiated for our people. The conferences on peace advocacy have given me clear insights on the relevance of “reconciliation” (pag-sulot) among our people. There is no real difference between our religions. We come from the same roots. From our associations I have witnessed pure dedication and generosity coming from the Christians...), revealed Nuraiza. Some of her relatives even warned her of the Christians at times calling them “panipu” (deceitful). Based on her own experience however she considered those remarks baseless. She believed that the

1974 war was a lesson for all Muslims. Many were exploited by the powers-that-be she reasoned thus it is about time for Muslims to take a definite stand regarding their future. *“Kita na in mag-baya bang mag-bunoh atawa mag-sulot”* (We should be the ones to decide whether we want war or peace to prevail), she asserted.

Like Nuraiza, Hussein is active in community work. He is a member of the *Jihad-al Akhbar*, a non-government Muslim organization and a student of the MSU-Jolo finishing a course in Islamic Studies. His concept of the 1974 war mainly focused on the wrong beliefs of war among some Muslims. The idea of *jihad* for instance would mean a “peaceful struggle” within oneself against evil deeds and not an offensive war that can be launched at all times, Muksan clarified. It is religious in the sense that it can only be waged as a “defensive war” when there is outright persecution of the Muslims. Today, Muksan observed the Christian community in Jolo has shown mutual interest in uplifting the moral consciousness of the people through *suwarah* (dialogue). *“In kata-uran Christians di ha da-ira nag-pakita sin baya nila mag-suwarah iban sin mga Muslims biya sin Notre Dame Peace Center. Asal in kalinaw sin kahawman in pipikil da isab nila”* (A number of Christians now in Jolo has shown commitment to dialogue with the Muslims one example is the Notre Dame Peace Center. Like the *Jihad-al-Akbhar* their concern is for peace to prevail) Muksan concluded.

Apathy dominated his outlook in life. Abdil was neither here nor there. Out of selling cigarettes and sometimes “*shabu*” he claimed to be supporting two wives. His grandparents died during the “big fire” followed by his parents thus he never got the chance of stepping inside a classroom. He was simply too worn out to respond to the harsh realities of life. Even while feuds have worsened in the place where he has resided- barangay Asturias, he would simply say that the 1974 siege happened because it was meant to happen like anything else. His opinions about the Christians did not really say much except “*di da tu-od sila lumamud-lamud ha mga Muslims. Mara-yii mabuga atawa maluman hatiko. Ma-i-tong ko rah ha lima ko in na-mi-mii siga kako. Di da ma-uno bang di sila manga-sip*” (They don’t get to socialize much with Muslims. Perhaps they are scared or shy? I can count with my fingers the few customers I have among them. It does not really matter if they keep their distance), Abdil confided.

Table 10. The Perceptions of the Young Adults

<b>Christian Joloano War Survivors Towards the Muslims (General Perceptions)</b>	<b>Muslim Joloano war Survivors Towards the Christians (General Perceptions)</b>
Muslims can be violent fighters and good partners. [ <i>Awon Muslims maka-buga bang atuhan sah awon da isab marayaw iban ka-pangandulan.</i> ] –Allan	Christians can be good friends and worst enemies just like the Muslims. [ <i>In kata-uran Christians biya rah katoḥ marayaw bagayon sah mangii bang kaluhon.</i> ] –Nuraiza
Muslims can be the oppressors and the oppressed. [ <i>Muslims sibo-sibo in nakarihil kasigpit ha manusya sila rah isab in kiyasigpitan...ha pag-bu-buno.</i> ]–Marie Jane	Christians can be corrupt as well as abused. [ <i>Bunnal awon ha mga Christians in dupang sah awon dah isab kanila in diyo-dupang.</i> ] –Hussein
Muslims can be ambitious as well as selfless. [ <i>Awon Muslims in nasilaw ha alta sah awon dah isab in way nag-baya kasaḥang ha baran nila</i>	Christians can be manipulative and dedicated. [ <i>Mapanday in kaibanan Christians sah awon kanila in huminang tu-od karayawan.</i> ]- Nuraiza

<i>sadja.]-Eric</i>	
Muslims as well as the Christians are victims of leaders who only speak the language of war. <i>[Sibo-sibo in Muslims iban Christians naraah sin karupangan sin nakurah nag-bu-bunoh sadja in kaingatan.]-Allan</i>	Christians are victims of graft and corruption of leaders as much as the Muslims that time. <i>[In mga Christians iban Muslims nalapay ha ngii sin pag-paagan sin hula sin mga nakurah.]-Nuraiza</i>
Muslims want peace and economic security as much as the Christians. <i>[In manusya Muslims iban Christians nag-ba-baya kalinaw iban kasañang sin hula.]-Eric</i>	Christians aspire for unity and progress in the same way as the Muslims. <i>[In mga Christians nag-pi-pikil sin karayawan sin kahawman biya dah sin mga Muslims.]- Hussein</i>

#### IV. The Objective Realities

Getting the cooperation of the co-authors was easier imagined than actualized. It was primarily the apprehension of getting misunderstood that they were at first hesitant to plunge head-on in the research project. Finally after my several attempts at persuasion and visitations they were with me all the way and were as eager as I am to get the work done. The security of the co-authors was fundamental in a volatile place like Jolo. After getting the permission from the head of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI) of the Notre Dame of Jolo College (NDJC), the Christian Joloanos were gathered for their FGDs at the De Masenod Formation Center located at the heart of town. The Muslim Joloanos on the other hand opted to utilize the conference hall of the Sulu Chamber of Commerce office at the Jolo Boy Scout Headquarters with the invitation from the incumbent president.

In two separate focus group discussions the Christian and Muslim Joloano key informants have identified various war issues in Mindanao which they believed prevailed in their community and therefore constituted their *objective realities*. For purposes of the study the issues extracted from the intensive discussions were categorized generally as *shared institutional realities* and *culture-bound realities*.

Several topics elicited from both groups mostly focused on stories they hear about the mass media and its perceived role(s) in the conflict and other media information relevant to the war e.g. *the media as crystallizers of the on-going war in Mindanao; the Tripoli Agreement, the ARMM, the GRP-MNLF peace talks and the war rehabilitation programs*. These subjects which form part of the *shared institutional realities* were clustered under *media war issues*. The rest of the shared institutionalized stories that are not media-related are lumped as *other concepts of war*. The narratives generally focused on the *motives* of the *key actors* in the mutiny e.g. *Filipino Muslims wanted absolute control...Filipino Christians wanted to dominate Muslims...Filipino Christians and Muslims cannot co-exist peacefully*. Finally discussions that generated beliefs of war according to local customs were classified under culture-bound realities e.g. the concepts on *religious war* and *conciliation*.

## **A. Shared Institutional Realities**

### **1. On Media War Issues**

*The media as crystalizers of vital war issues...the Tripoli-ARMM embody sentiments of Filipino Muslims in conflict communities...the GRP-MNLF peace talks as venue for airing grievances of Muslims...the war rehabilitation programs benefited war victims in conflict areas.*

#### **a. The Elderly**

*The Christian Co-authors*

The elderly Christians have surfaced the general belief that the mass media function to inform the public of relevant

issues especially of the on-going conflict in Mindanao. They however agreed in common that what they know about the responsibilities of the press run contrary to what is actually taking place.

Jose for instance was quite vocal when he expressed “*Masul karungugan natoh in media kunoh in makatabang mag-disseminate information pasalan sin pag-bunoh di kato. In susa iban kasakit sin manusya ipa-abot ha parenta sin news supaya ika-rihil kato in improvements iban tabang kagunahan natoh. Sah bang ako in asubohon biya bukon ini in ki-kita koh...*” [We often hear about how the media helps in disseminating news about the war in Mindanao. The miserable plight we are in, they say would be brought to the attention of the government through the news for improvements and assistance to come to us. But that is not how I see it if I am to be asked], declared Jose.

Furthermore important issues that should be discussed in public by the media Petrona observed are seldom tackled in news reports. The scarcity of newsworthy information about the TRIPOLI-ARMM, the peace talks, and war rehabilitation programs she claimed has not only worsened the atmosphere of distrust but has likewise kept people in conflict communities in the dark. “*In pag-iyanon sin kaibanan bang mag-asubo ako pasalan sin peace talks, la-wung nila kumita na sadja kita news*

*supaya makahati bang unoh in piyag-i-ison-isonan sin parenta ha peace talks. Yan kunoh ha TV atawa ha newspapers...Sa way rah tu-od agon ma-basa ha newspapers atawa ka-kita-an ha TV. Di kita ma-ino-inoh bang ma-taud in awam di kato...*” [Others would say if I ask them about the peace talks to watch the news. They say it’s on the TV or the newspapers. But there is little for us to read in the newspapers or watch in the TV. It is not surprising if many among us here are ignorant of what is happening...], Petrona explained. Romeo admitted that he was never a subscriber of news in any form even in the past nevertheless he likewise expressed dismay over the fact that the tri-media perform a different role from what he believes it should do. *“Hangkan dah kitah nag-hihilo-walah sadja in hinang sin media mag-pa-lago sin kalo supaya maka-untong. Marayii maka-pikil kita sin huminang karayawan bang awon karayawan ha reports nila. Nahi-hipo na sadja sin violent stories iban crimes in reports nila bang bukon showbusiness...”* [No wonder we are always fighting what the media does is to magnify insignificant issues to make profit. Perhaps we can start thinking positively if they concentrate on reporting about positive things. There stories are often filled with violent stories and crimes if not showbusiness...], Romeo commented. Jose was particularly critical about how the media tackle issues concerning poverty

alleviation programs of the SPCPD in the ARMM saying that such initiatives mostly benefited the wrong recipients. *“Kami in war victims sah in loans ha livelihood programs yadto piya-pag business sin mga dayahan masu-ok ha project implementors. Way ini ha reports sin mga media sawab mabuga sila mag-expose”* (We are the victims of war yet the loans for livelihood programs benefited many rich businessmen close to project implementors. The mass media are silent about this because of their dread of the possible repercussions of exposure), Jose added.

#### *The Muslim Co-Authors*

Babu Arag and Jikirani were not very familiar about the media in the same manner as the Christian elderly. They nevertheless expressed negative views about its supposedly function from the little information they get by word of mouth. *“Way pang-hati namo bang unoh in ha lawum katas habal. Asal dah di kitah maka-basa way pangadji nato biya sin nakapag-school. Sa pag-suy-suyan kami sin naka-ingat pasalan sin TRIPOLI iban sin ARMM. Nakapag-ison na kunoh in parenta iban sin mga naku-rah, sah sampay biha-on way rah kita na-iig ha kasigpit. Puting sadja in yan ha news.”* [We have no idea what is inside the newspapers. We are not literates like those



who have attended school. But we are told by those who have knowledge about the Tripoli and the ARMM. But until now nothing good has come out of it. We are still in dire condition. The news reports are simply lies...], Babu Arag stressed. For his part Jikirani related his notion of the television news reports, *“Sambat pa sin naka-ingat asal in masul yan ha suy-soy ha pag-tawagon TV in karayawan sin parenta. Marayii hatiko biyabaran sila sin parenta. Mayta way pag-isonan sin pasalan ha pag-buno iban kasigpit di kato?”* [According to those who know, what are often reported in the TV are stories in favor of the government. Perhaps they are being paid by the government. Why are there no stories about the fightings and our sad predicament here?], claimed Jikirani. Hamba on the other hand did not completely criticize the press yet has questioned the accuracy and worthiness of news reports just like his Christian counterparts. *“Bunnal in media tu-od in makatabang ha manusya ha pag-pahati ha katan ha guwa sin दौर Sulu bang uno in kiya-abutan parakala sin mga tao dii. Sah di kita maka-bisara bang kabunnalan ba atawa dii in yan ha reports nila. Bang sila mabuga marii biya-di-in sila maka-kawa news sin kabunnalan? Way nila kiya-kita-an in sigpit sin manusya.”* [It is true the media like they say can really help in informing the world outside Sulu of what is happening here. But we have doubts as to

the accuracy of their reports. How can the news reporters get accurate news when their fear prevents them from coming to our place? They will never know for sure how our people suffer], Hamba lamented.

Relevant war issues were seldom reported from the news. And if there are they complained about the reliability of the reports just like what Hamba has stressed. Babu Arag at the outset was complaining about why nothing constructive and visible has come out the reports they were told by those who understand the news. Hamba for his part has expressed hope that the peace talks which many believe provide the mouthpiece for the marginalized war victims would in reality do so. The war rehabilitation program is another delicate issue which they claim is rarely discussed from the news. They would have wanted their sentiments of the unfairness of the implementation be told to the public

**b. The Middle-Aged**

*The Christian Co-Authors*

The middle-aged co-authors have also surfaced common sentiments regarding the public understanding of the role of the media in conflict issues particularly in the Mindanao war. Majority of the Christian Joloanos are convinced that the mass

media has not fulfilled its role as a “news makers” just like what everybody knows and what it claims it does. Most Muslim middle-aged participants in the same tone disapprove of the commonly-held beliefs of the press which they claimed are far fetched and in contrast with its present performance in the Mindanao problem.

Sharon for instance remarked about how she has always observed the contradiction even in the past between her concept of the media as makers of news and its present role. *“Misan ako nag-ino-ino bang mayta mahang rah tu-od mag-paka guwa in news pasalan di kato ha Mindanao. In masul karunungan nato show business. In Kata-uran manusia di asal tele-novela in kikit.”* (I even wonder why it is very rare that news about Mindanao is reported. What we often find are issues on show business. That is why almost everybody here are familiar with tele-novela than news), uttered Sharon. The contradiction is likewise raised by Eric as he expressed his views about the media in relation to war issues *“Malago in mahinang sin television ha pag-announce sin mga developments di kato. Ini in subay hihinang sin press supaya maka-hati in parenta iban mga manusia ha guwa sin lupa Sug”* (The television can help a lot in announcing developments here. This is supposedly the role performed by the press to inform the government and people

outside Sulu), clarified Eric. While Peter not only criticized but blamed the media for being remiss of its duty saying, “*awon responsibility sin media ha public sawab sila in diyudongog sin mga tao. Bang putting in reports asal way mag-bunoh na sadja kita*” (The media has a responsibility towards the public because the people rely on their reports. If the news were all lies then naturally we will always be at war), claimed Peter.

The role of news reporting in disseminating information that would enlighten people in war communities has likewise been discussed. The co-authors have negated some issues which to some extent have not been exhaustively discussed by the tri-media. Distorted facts they say often fill the news about the happenings in Mindanao. They claim that contrary to what people outside Mindanao think, many people in war-torn areas are at a lost as to the real essence of the Tripoli and the ARMM, Muslims and Christians alike. Partly because of the lack of information they say a feeling of isolation pervades among the people in the south. The peace talks that sometimes are reported have confused the people in terms of its objectives. The issue of “autonomy” they claim was never resolved despite continuous negotiations the agenda of which they themselves know little about. “How can the public think that the ‘peace talks’ provide us the venue when we don’t feel like we are a part of the peace

process?” They first had reservations in discussing about the livelihood programs undertaken in the Southern Philippines Zone for Peace and Development (SZOPAD) by the Southern Philippine Center for Peace and Development in the ARMM. There are delicate issues they think which are not given attention by the press for fear of untoward consequences. But these facts they believe should be elevated to the public and the authorities concern for proper actions. There were references made to anomaly taking place in the implementation of projects and misappropriation of funds.

#### *The Muslim Co-Authors*

Alona was the most vocal of the three middle-aged Muslim co-author who criticized the government for not being truthful to its promise. With the implementation of the ARMM she declared nothing much concrete has happened in terms of improvement, And the press whom she believes is protecting the government should reconsider ultimately between serving the public or fabricating war issues to earn profit. Muksan likewise sees the conflicting role of the mass media in the conflict communities. He claimed to hear and read a lot of entertainment stories or sensational account of the war on top of the inaccuracy of details in the press whenever there are casualty linking names

of people or events which took place in the mountains. It is highly probable he concluded that the news reports are seldom confirmed because news reporters do not come to the scene of the incidents. *“Biya-di-in sila maka-story sin pag-buno di ha dairang bang yadto sila ha Manila? Misan in pag-iyanon news correspondents nila bukon da accurate”* (How can they narrate the story of war in our place when they are out there in Manila? Even there news correspondents are not always accurate).

**c. The Young Adults**

*The Christian Co-Authors*

Just like their Muslim counterparts they were outspoken about the perceived role of the mass media in the Mindanao conflict. Eric for instance criticized the media for not being true to its form. *“Ha lugay sin wakto naka-experience ako encounters sin mga rebels iban military ha pag Red Cross volunteer ko wayroon ako naka-rungog news accurate in detail sin reports. Masul awon kuno miyatay misan way atawa in miyatay rebels misan civilians”* (For the length of time that I have experienced encounters between the rebels and the military as a Red Cross volunteer I seldom hear news reports with accurate details. At times the reports would claim casualty even when there is none or that some rebels died even when they were civilians). Mary

Jane furthermore thought it is ironical for the press to be called a “watchdog” when what it does she claims is to turn a blind eye to what is taking place in the area. *“Bang bunnal tu-od tumabang in press mag-pahati sin pasalan sin corruption even violence dii ha hula subay ipa-guwa nila ha public in outcome sin mga war programs sin parenta iban in pag-iyanon suspicious operation sin mga military iban mga Asu Sayaf”* (If there is truth to the willingness of the press to inform the public of the corruption and violence taking place in Sulu, It should report outcome of government war programs and the suspicious military operation allegedly linked with the Abu Sayaf bandits). Allan commented on the insufficiency of news reports about Mindanao he believed has contributed to the misconceptions and to some extent ignorance of some folks as to the issue of “autonomy.” Even the on-going peace negotiations have not ironed-out controversial points in the concept of autonomy in the ARMM since there are limited information dissemination from the media and the government.

### *The Muslim Co-Authors*

The younger breed of Muslim Joloano war survivors were as direct as their Christian counterparts in expressing disagreement with what they perceived as the conflicting role of

the media in Mindanao. Nuraiza is positive that with the all-out support coming from the media the consciousness of people in conflict areas would improve and a lot of constructive things will follow. *“Subay mag-perform in mass media sin role niya as news makers dumihil information pasalan sin developments ha ARMM iban sin uno in ika-tabang sin mga tao supaya ma-involve sila”* (The mass media should perform its role as news makers in disseminating information about developments in the ARMM to encourage involvement from the people). Hussein for his part recognized the importance of the role of news reporting in bringing about change and understanding in conflict communities. The media is in fact a central component in “pag-suwarah” or dialogue only if it truly performs its role in the Mindanao problem claimed Hussein.

Sad to say, the news concerning issues about the ARMM and the peace talks have not satisfied the hunger of the public for details remarked Hussein. The establishment of the ARMM he says did not necessarily put the much-awaited autonomy in place despite the continuing peace negotiations. And on top of this, Nuraiza claimed that the rarely reported war programs generated disappointment instead of alleviating sufferings of many war victims. Abdil who seldom spoke during the FGDs only has this to say *“way rah mahinang in parenta ha Manila misan maka-*



*hati sila sin kasigpit nato dii ha lupa Sug ha news. Asal dah malayo sila, di dah sila ma-uno sin hilo wala dii”* (As usual the government in Manila will not be able to do anything even if it learns of our sufferings here through the news. They are far enough to worry about our troubles here).

## **B. On the Other Concepts of War**

*The Filipino Muslims wanted absolute control...the Filipino Christians attempted to dominate the Filipino Muslims...the Christian and Muslim Filipinos cannot co-exist peacefully.*

### **1. The Elderly**

*The Christian Co-Authors*

The elderly Christians have commonly raised issues which they believe the public subscribe to by reason of stories they hear and carried over from the past. They were ambivalent about some issues convinced they are hearsay while the rest they believe have some element of truth in them. Romeo for example is partly convinced that the Muslim fighters wanted to rule. *“Awon mga stories pag-karungugan nato pasalan sin intentions sin mga Muslims mag-rule dii ha Sug. Wakto 1974 pag-bunoh ini in hipag-suy-soy sin manusya hangkan dah nag-join na in kata-uran bata iban ma-as ha baya nila ntrol ha lupa Sug in kaba-ya-an sin mga Muslims. Bihan da isab in panga-tud koh”*(There are stories we hear about the intentions of the Muslims to rule in Sulu. During the 1974 war many thought this was so. That is why the young and the old joined the siege to protect Bangsamoro. They say the Muslims wanted to take control of Sulu. That is what I also think.) Romeo completely agreed with Jose saying that the rebels wanted to monopolize the government

and resources in the south. And many were naïve enough to have been persuaded to participate in the mutiny, reasoned Romeo. He however denied the logic of another issue raised in the discussion regarding the attempt of the Christians to dominate illiterate Muslims which triggered the rebellion. It was impossible he says considering that the Christians were outnumbered by the Muslims. Furthermore they claim that the story that Muslims and Christians are mortal enemies and therefore can never co-exist well has dominated the minds not only of the people in conflict areas but in other parts of the country as well. And this they say compounded the present problems in the south. Petrona declared, “*masul in mga tao nag-pi-pikil mahunit kunoh in mga Christians iban mga Muslims makapag-agad marayaw sawab way kunoh piyag-Sali-an in panga-hagari nato. Way kuno wakto in kita maka-pagsulot biya dah sin naka-una. Hangkan dah nag-bu-bunoh sadja*” (Oftentimes we hear people say *that Christians and Muslims cannot go well* together because of their differences in belief. And we hear this from people who are mostly not from this place. There is no way they say that we can reconcile just like in the past. That is why the conflict continues).

#### *The Muslim Co-Authors*

They have enumerated a number of war issues which they thought have complicated problems in the south. Hamba talked about the falsity of the general belief especially of the Filipinos outside Mindanao

that the Muslims wanted absolute control. What the freedom fighters wanted he claimed was to take active part in chartering their future. Jikirani on the other hand admitted that a number of Muslim who joined in the siege wanted justice but not monopoly. *“In kabaya-an sin manusya maka-hundong in karupangan sin mga sundalo”* (our people wanted to stop the abuses of the military). Babu Arag on the other hand was convinced that the Christians wanted to dominate through the government and the military for the apparent reason that she was victimized when her land was taken from her. The elders nevertheless maintained that in the past Muslims and Christians were good partners particularly before the destruction of the 1974 revolution in Sulu and therefore rejected the impossibility of a pleasant relation.

## 2. The Middle-Aged

### *The Christian Co-Authors*

They were kids when the war broke and yet their memories were vivid enough to have provided them with pictures of the people and the place in the past. From their narratives it was apparent that they blame Marcos and his dictatorial prerogatives for the tragedy that befell the Muslims and Christians alike. Sharon who was raised in an environment that appreciated the Muslims particularly the Samals (Muslim sea dwellers) thought the issue that the Muslims wanted to dominate was far-fetched. What they simply wanted she explained was to be respected and allowed to run their own lives. On the other hand Peter claimed it was a joke for the general public to have even considered the few Christians to have attempted to dominate the Muslims in Sulu. *“Wakto yadto in manunya diyurugalan ha mga sundalo hangkan da marayii pangannal nila sibo in pikilan sin Christians katan iban sin Chrisitan military”* (That time many Muslims were hostile against the military. They believed all Christians and the Christian military think the same way). This mentality he believed contributed to the existing misunderstanding between the two cultures. Perhaps he clarified if we think about the Muslim-Christian dichotomy from the national perspective the issue of domination is possible because the Muslims are outnumbered. Ronald for his part likewise opposed that assumption that

peaceful co-existence between Muslims and Christians is improbable. He explained that he is a mixture of two cultures, a mestizo Muslim. And all his life he has been brought up in a Muslim household even if his father is a Christian Cebuano.

### *The Muslim Co-Authors*

Like their Christian counterpart they were extremely vocal about the involvement of Marcos in the man made catastrophe. They were branded “Marcos babies” because majority were born and have witnessed the longest term of government in his time. It was therefore not surprising if most of their narratives centered on Marcos’ atrocities.

Alona for instance claimed it was not the Muslims who wanted control but Marcos who used the military with his dictatorial powers. The classic example she asserted was the Jabidah Massacre in 1968 just a few years before the mutiny. Muksan for his part argued that the Christians may have attempted to dominate at first through the military but in the end the Muslim themselves were blinded by wealth joined in the melee of power grabbing during the siege and even at present. The Muslim leaders he claimed should be primarily responsible for whatever failure that befalls his followers as a consequence of the war. Hadja Fatima furthermore argued that it is not the Christians nor the Muslims who wanted to dominate but some self-possessed individuals exploiting them. Peaceful co-existence for her is a matter of mutual

commitment. Furthermore the group believed that pleasant relationship can prevail if there is willingness to forgive and understand each other.

### **3. The Young Adults**

#### *The Christian Co-Authors*

The story regarding the Muslims' desire to have control in the province according to Eric has continued to plague the minds of those who are not from Sulu. But "there is more to it than meets the eye" he claimed. It would appear that some Muslims who wanted power were in actuality motivated by some instigators who are not even from the place. Some really wanted power for themselves declared Eric like those who are notorious for warring among their own people- the Magic Eight (ex-rebels protégée of Marcos). Mary Jane furthermore thought it was impossible for the Christians to dominate even if they wanted to. The small number of the Christians in the community would not enable them to attain supremacy in force or otherwise. Allan for his part was saying that Muslims and Christians can socialize well. In fact he claims many have been acculturated because of inter-marriage. Other Christians he claimed have converted and became "balik" Islam and in some cases Muslims also embraced Christianity. The present crisis in town he believed has something to do with the Muslims penchant for guns, goons and gold which to immensely worsened the peace and order condition

here. Otherwise just like before, his grandparents would say there was a good co-existence between Muslims and Christians in Sulu.

### *The Muslim Co-Authors*

The young Muslim adults especially Nuraiza and Hussein have proudly admitted a good relationship with their Christian counterparts. Their exposure to “pag-suwar” or dialogues with the various community sectors allowed them to broaden their association with “the other” culture. They have deeply been involved in peace advocacy and livelihood programs for the poor and the marginalized majority in the locality. It is true they claim that misconceptions about the fact that Muslims wanted to rule and the Christians to take advantage of the illiterate Muslims have saturated the minds of the public. They are convinced that without efforts coming from both sides the notion that the cultures will never merge will be inculcated in the minds of the young. And so, they have decided to take the necessary actions to mitigate if not eliminate this kind of consciousness revealed Nuraiza.

## **C. Culture-Bound Realities**

*The 1974 mutiny was a form of ‘jihad’...that the Mindanao peace process is reflective of the conflict communities’ concept of conciliation.*

### **1. The Elderly**



### *The Christian Co-Authors*

The Christian elders have observed that in the province especially outside Sulu there is a prevailing notion that the 1974 war and to some extent the on-going sporadic conflicts between the military and the rebels have a religious color. Romeo was convinced that this was so having seen the involvement of some Muslim religious leaders prior to the siege and thereafter. His stories narrated how he witnessed the rise of insurgent groups gathered inside the Mosques, “kaddai” or coffeshops and other public places in town before the mutiny. Petrona on the other hand insists that the siege was not a “jihad” having known the meaning of religious war according to Muslim tradition as she is married to a Muslim “*bunnal biya “jietweehad” in guwa sin pag-bunoh sah bukon dah tu-od bang bistahon. Imatu in manusya supaya karungugan sin parenta in kasigpit nila*” (It is true the war would seem like”jihad” but it was not. It was more of a desperate move on their part to be heard by the government...). She elaborated that she is quite aware of the differences in religious emphasis between the Muslims and the Christians saying that the bible does not allow war as an option against religious prosecution.

Jose raised the point that the tradition of “conciliation” between the Christians and the Muslims must have affected the on-going Mindanao peace process. There are probable elements in the local practice of “pag-sulot” or settlement that were overlooked in the

negotiation between the GRP and the Muslim rebels, he stressed. Since the government essentially follows the western orientation of negotiation there is that possibility of conflict in the meaning of conciliation. He mentions the need for immediate material consideration in the concept of “blood money” for damages among parties and the participation of the elders in decision-making.

### *The Muslim Co-Authors*

Babu Arag and Jikirani among the elders have apparently exhibited a belief that the 1974 was a manifestation of “jihad” which for them justified the uprising. “I was not regretful of the fact that my husband and a son perished in the battle rather than having died for no cause,” emphasized Babu Arag. She was positive it was the best option she had that time after having allegedly been deprived of her land. Jikirani likewise thought that “jihad” was a reasonable move for them to put a stop to what he believed was oppression in the form of harassments initiated by the soldiers in connivance with some priests. Hamba on the other hand considered that a “revolution” was a course of action open for the Muslims and therefore maintained that the 1974 war not a “jihad” but a revolt. He claims a lot of Muslims wanted to be appeased after having been subjected to indiscriminate acts of the military.

The issue that there is conflict between local tradition and the Mindanao conciliation process was likewise raised in their discussions.

True, they say there is incongruity in the notion of settlement. In the first place Jikirani claimed those who compose the MNLF and other Muslim representatives were not known to them. Besides the object of negotiation started out fine but later became obscured thus making the establishment of the ARMM a mockery in itself. The meaning of “autonomy” until now Hamba declared has not been resolved. What is needed Babu Arag claimed are visible and immediate improvements in our place.

## **2. The Middle-Aged**

### *The Christian Co-Authors*

They were convinced that the siege in 1974 was not religious in nature. It was an uprising as a result of the maltreatment suffered by the Muslims in the south and compounded during the Martial Law era. Sharon declared, “It is only logical for some people especially non-Joloanos to assume it has a religious meaning because of what Marcos tried to project.” In fact until now, Peter claimed a number of northern Filipinos are scared to come to Mindanao for fear of getting caught in the crossfire of a “religious battle.” Allan believes that until we clear our minds of this notion, the misconception thrives and can worsen.

The Mindanao peace process is another delicate issue that we try to evade stated Peter. For some reasons, observed Peter we pretend that everything is going towards the right direction since “autonomy is already in place with the establishment of the ARMM.” But ironically he revealed even those who are supposedly recipients of the peace agreement are ignorant of these developments and are as miserable as when the ARMM has not been implemented. Why? We ask ourselves this question. The answer is clear: in reality the war victims are barely consulted and tradition is disregarded.

### *The Muslim Co-Authors*

Muksan believed that “jihad” can only be declared by leaders who possess the “kusog” (strength). He claimed that leaders are looked upon by his followers with reverence as he is believed to command powers directly from the Supreme Being. This, he declared is also the case among Muslims in Mindanao where politics and religion is closely intertwined.

Even among the Muslims therefore “jihad” has always been linked to a collective effort to fight. Thus, the siege undertaken by the MNLF in Sulu in 1974 was generally thought of as a form of “jihad.” Muksan saw the 1974 war as motivated more by political interests rather than religion. Alona also believed it was a form of political travesty and distorted beliefs that pushed Marcos through the military to create havoc in Mindanao. Hadja Fatima thought the war was purely ill-motivated, designed in such a way as to give it a religious color by the powers-that-be at the expense of the soldiers, the rebels and the civilians. It was never a form of “jihad” she emphasized.

Tradition is an essential facet in all aspect of social interaction. In the present negotiations for peace wherein two cultures are trying to reconcile each others’ idiosyncracies local norms should be considered. “The Mindanao peace process although many think serves well as mouthpiece of the people in the south has been criticized for having failed to respond to local tradition,” Alona confided.

### **3. The Young Adults**

#### *The Christian Co-Authors*

Even in their youthful minds, the co-authors believed that the past conflict was not in any way religious in form. But local tradition has made fighting a norm which is closely linked with the Muslim religion creating a general impression that the 1974 mutiny was “jihad” among the freedom fighters. Eric for example sees the 1974 mutiny as a struggle for power among ambitious leaders. The co-authors affirmed however of the tendency of the public to associate the problem in the south with cultural and religious differences. They believe that prejudices born of past unpleasant relationship have primarily influence present mind set compounded by political ambitions of some leaders in both the Muslim and Christian camps.

The issue of conciliation is another concept that has drawn strong comments from the young Christian co-authors. After the ARMM was implemented and “autonomy” was granted there was a public belief that the problem in Mindanao is “reconciled.” The on-going peace talks gave the impression that there is a dynamic exchange taking place between the government and the people in conflict areas. And by implication the grievances of the people are heard and dealt with according to the accepted norms. The co-authors have generally expressed positive remarks on the efforts of the GRP and the Muslim representatives (MNLF/MILF) in the Mindanao peace process. They however revealed

similar observations regarding how the peace negotiation seemed to be at odds with the local practice of “pag-sulot” or settlement. Allan declared, “the negotiators in the Mindanao peace talks should always be ready to adjust the agenda of their negotiation to ensure that contingencies are considered.” In the same manner Eric expressed concern about making the process of conciliation fit with the local tradition to make the people feel they are part of the Mindanao peace efforts.

#### *The Muslim Co-Authors*

They also noticed the disparity between the general belief and what the local folks in Sulu think about the Mindanao peace talks. There is that assumption that all is well since ARMM is already established. Hussein believes that for any “pag-suwara” or peace building effort to be successful, involvement of the people concerned should be considered. He thinks that the government has shown willingness to dialogue with the people but its sincerity and full commitment remains to be seen. Nuraiza whose attitude towards dialogue likewise speaks of openness and maturity commented that the Mindanao peace process can only move forward towards the right direction if the voices of the people at the grassroots are truly included in the on-going deliberations. By involving the true victims of oppression- the war survivors of Mindanao, problems in the south can properly be addressed.

#### **D. Understanding Motives Behind the Objective Realities**

##### *Stories of Key Actors in the Community*

Four traditional leaders have shared their insights through their own version of the war. The information provided meaningful explanations to the prevailing consciousness of the people that forms the *objective realities* in a war-torn community of mixed cultures.

The story of a *Muslim warrior* reveals the circumstances that led a rebel to track the path of a freedom fighter. A *Christian soldier* tells of the vow a soldier makes as a protector of the state to ensure its sovereignty in times of war. A *priest* narrates of his vision of peace in an unlikely place where animosity is strong due to cultural circumstances and political power-play that have created misunderstandings between two peoples. Finally from the words of a *Grand Mufti* (revered Muslim religious leader), the meaning of a “true jihad” (religious battle) is spoken with wisdom and interrelated with the local beliefs.

Bapa Hajirul, 76, (see Appendix C1) is a proud Muslim warrior whose sad experience provided the study with untold stories that gave strength and local color to the characters of the co-authors. Like many of the freedom fighters who joined in the 1974 mutiny he spoke of their sentiments, articulated their fears and revealed their dreams. His notion of war speaks of the vow made before God to uphold their promise of protecting the *Bangsamoro* and keeping their dignity as protectors of their homeland. Like the rest of those who fought and failed, he believes that the Muslims were being driven from their land and



therefore were justified in defending their rights. They only had one option and that is “to fight” or they will perish.

From the point of view of a soldier, the story of Sergeant Sarmiento, 59, (see Appendix C2) was a revelation of the unspoken truth behind the 1974 tragedy in Sulu. He saw “little Vietnam” in Sulu at the height of the upheaval during Martial Law. He spoke of fragmentation bombs, torture chambers, and warrantless arrests undertaken by the military in response to the orders of the higher authority. They were simply “following orders” and were obliged to secure the integrity of the state he emphasized. He recalls how the “killing fever” possessed the actors in the war scenario both from the camps of the military and the rebels. It was a regretful event he confided which would be hard to erase from the minds of the living.

Father Roy (see Appendix C3) envisions a better chance of peace among the younger generation. He too saw the transitions in Sulu as a place and in terms of the relationship of the people. Father has served with the Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI) ministry and the Notre of Jolo College for several years. He can attest to the harmony that once characterized the relationship between the Muslims and the Christians prior to the mutiny. Major developments that marked progress in Sulu were very visible after the American occupation towards the First Philippine Republic until the late 1960s. Livelihood among the people was easy and the barter and trading system was a booming enterprise. Father Roy particularly stressed successful partnership between the Muslims and Christians in improving the province otherwise

disproving public notion earlier mentioned of the impossibility of a peaceful co-existence between them.

The essence of a “true jihad” was discussed by a revered Muslim religious leader and Grand Mufti, Ustadz Sali (see Appendix C4) in a lengthy but interesting interview. He once and for all clarified that the war that took place in Sulu in 1974 was not a “jihad.” It is true he admitted that in an extreme case when religion is at stake a “mujahid” (a believer) can wage a war against persecution. He explained that in reality what has taken place was a political joust between the government and some Muslim leaders who tried to protect the interest of their people and the Bangsamoro. Nevertheless it still preferable for the Muslims he declared to opt for an avoidance of conflict in all cases. No less than the Prophet Muhammad (s.w.a.t.) he claimed in his sunnah (tradition) emphasized of the virtue of avoiding conflictor “Bukhari.” Ustadz likewise believes that there is no reason why a closer relation cannot be revived since the Christians and Muslims have always been good partners in the past.

## CHAPTER SIX

### A CORRELATION OF THE SUBJECTIVE AND THE OBJECTIVE WAR REALITIES

*The present situation of unpeace in Mindanao pushes people to try to know more of the other. A hope and a dream...*

13<sup>th</sup> Bishop-Ulama Forum Assembly  
Cagayan de Oro City

The first section in this chapter elaborated on how a “parallel construction” was established from the narratives of the Christian and Muslim war survivors of Jolo by correlating their subjective and objective realities. This constitutes the final *reconstruction* phase whereby the two core groups across age were made to express their reactions to a set of institutionalized war issues they earlier identified. The correlation of these war realities was followed by an analysis of the co-authors’ *fantasy themes* (narratives) surfacing points of convergence or divergence among them in the last section.

Examining the parallel reality in the study involved tracing the simultaneous process of reality construction by two entities and of drawing commonalities from their appraisal of a situation. The discussions that ensued after the FGDs generated variant responses from the co-authors. It was by probing deeply into these reactions that parallelism was noted. For example, the two core groups demonstrated similar and dissimilar reactions to war issues based on two considerations, their subjective and objective realities: *First*, their subjective realities as war victims by implication spoke of the bond they shared by virtue of a common tragic experience. *Second*, their objective realities however are two-folds; as Joloanos they share common institutional realities of war and as Christians or Muslims they observe distinct war beliefs exclusive of “the other” culture having been exposed to idiosyncracies particular to their own

people. The study tried to probe on how their subjective realities (psycho-social trauma and perceived images of the other culture) affected their responses to the objective realities (war issues).

The co-authors' responses to institutionalized war issues were "convergent" and "divergent" at the same time. Their reactions to shared institutional realities (media war issues and other concepts of war) for instance have shown elements of convergence in the sense that they see the controversies in the same light albeit for different reasons. On the other hand their reactions to culture-bound realities (issues of religious war and conciliation) manifested divergent views owing primarily to their unique beliefs of war.

Side by side the Christian and Muslim war survivors of Jolo created their meanings of war inclusively and exclusively of each other- together as Joloanos and separately as distinct cultures. Noteworthy however is the fact that throughout the "reconstruction process" the two core groups' subjective realities became a common point of reference in their reactions towards the war issues allowing them to converge one way or the other across culture and age.

## **I. Correlating the War Realities**

### **A. Shared Institutional Realities**

#### **1. On Media War Issues**

In a more or less similar note the co-authors have expressed disappointment over the manner in which the mass media handle important and delicate stories of the war in Mindanao. After revealing their variant opinions they nevertheless ended up saying one thing in

common: *the lines of communication are dead between the government, the general public and the war survivors in conflict communities.*

*Christian Joloano Co-Authors*

Among the Christian co-authors, Jose was able to articulate in a gist what he thought of the media and the news about the war. *“Ha pikilan ko patay in lines of communication between ha parenta, mga communities outside Jolo iban sin manusya war victims di ha Sug. Way ra nakarihil bunnal tabang in media ha pag-dialogue sin parenta iban kita victims sin pag-bunoh. Marayaw in karungugan nato news about Tripoli atawa ARMM time pa hi Marcos sa bukon marayaw in end-results. Way rah nag-kugdan in pikilan sin manusya di iban sin parenta pasalan “autonomy.” Malago in hika-tabang sin media ha pag-pahati ha mga tao diih.”* (To my mind, I believe that the lines of communication are dead between the government, the outside communities and the war victims in Sulu. The mass media have not truly provided a venue for the government and for us to have a dialogue. We hear good news of the Tripoli and the ARMM since the time of Marcos but the end results are not good. The government and the common folks’ concept of “autonomy” here do not seem to coincide. The media can really help much in enlightening our people..). Jose stressed that this has always been the case with the media even in the past. There was news black out during the 1974 siege but even later the media, he observed

never accurately reported the tragedy. “The media never portrayed our pathetic condition here amidst senseless killings and the extent of the destruction in 1974. I believe that even now news reports about Mindanao are filtered. We have no idea who they are trying to protect,” Jose disclosed.

Petrona, another elderly Christian recounted her own observation mentioning that on several occasions she would be asked by her Muslim friends. “Unoh in hika-tabang sin ARMM kato? Awon hinang hika-rihil sin ARMM kato? (How can the ARMM help us? Are there jobs waiting for us in the ARMM?). The negative responses to their inquiries have apparently not improved the condition in the community according to Petrona. And it should have been along this line that the media especially the radio and television could have assisted, she believed. Aside from educating and informing the people, the media could have raised and brought to the attention of some sectors outside Jolo and to the legislators the woes of the war victims in terms of shelter and livelihood for more concrete actions. “It was a miracle that we survived the war. We could have perished in the *big fire* even if we escaped the wrath of some military or the Maoists. The “truth” behind the 1974 mutiny never fully came out of the media. We expected a more committed press after Martial Law on the contrary the news seem to avoid reporting the “truth” about the past and the present wars in

Mindanao and what the government has done about it,” observed Petrona.

His views may have been straightforward and loud from the beginning but Romeo an elderly Christian does not seem to be bothered convinced that kind words cannot be substitutes for truth. He likewise acknowledged the fact that newsworthy issues of war in Mindanao are seldom featured in news reports. He thinks however that even with the efforts coming from the mass media, enlightening common folks especially the Muslims in Sulu about the issues of war would be quite tough. *“Biya-di-in in pang-hati sin manusya sin pasalan sin ARMM iban peace talks ban kata-uran kanila di agon maka-basa sawab way pang-hati. Misan awun news ha TV asal da in kita-un nila action movies hi FPJ atawa Cesar Montano...”* (How can ordinary Muslims here learn about the ARMM and the peace talks when most of them are not literates? They would prefer to watch action movies of FPJ and Cesar Montano instead of news reports).

Sharon, a middle-aged Christian reacted to Romeo by stressing that illiteracy may affect the Joloanos’ news interest but not necessarily their desire to improve their community. She believes that with the assistance coming from the mass media and other sectors outside and within the community in informing and educating the people their level of awareness can improve. In conflict areas she believed that there is an urgent need to boost the morale of war victims through their exposure to

constructive news reports about Mindanao. The mass media in Sulu Sharon claimed are popular as forms of entertainment rather than newsmakers. It is true she claims that the people are fond of watching *Eat Bulaga* and *Mulawin* because options are limited. They only have two regular channels in TV and the cable system only provides entertainment shows. “What we hear or read from the news about Mindanao conflict is different from what we actually experience here. The 1974 war and the continuing encounters between the military and the rebels have changed our lives and the world outside should know. We need to reach out to be understood especially our children and the media can help a lot,” Sharon commented.

Several Joloanos agreed Eric would rather subscribe to komiks rather than buy the newspapers believing that news write-ups are usually intended for the people of Manila. He observed that the number of advertisements in the newspapers exceeds relevant news and stories are often about metro-politics, fashion, showbusiness and urban programs. “The folks here cannot relate...” he commented. “There is only one news outlet in the community that does not earn enough profit making the supply of the newspaper irregular,” he added. Eric like Jose believes that conflicts in the community can be abated if the Joloanos are well-informed and the media can truly provide the medium for the grievance of the people to be aired. It is about time for the government and the people’s representatives to be talking about the “meat” of the problem



which is “poverty” and “unemployment” of a number of displaced war victims. “After ‘the big fire’ razed most of our livelihood to the ground and some warlords took advantage of the people after the 1974 siege our old folks believed we have never recovered. This problem should come out of the news reports since our people do not have the chance to dialogue with the government directly,” Eric emphasized.

Mary Jane, also a young adult confessed that she has kept her reservations towards the Muslims especially after the beheading incidents but this does not mean that she does not filter reports she gets from the news. The Moro-villain and Christian-victim syndrome which she suggested the media likes to project, can be very effective in provoking animosity between the Muslims and Christians, she confessed. One way of minimizing such atmosphere of hostility is to temper the news with constructive stories that would encourage friendship. *“Yan in susa ha lawum atay sin mga Christians pasalan sin mga kidnapping dii ha Sug. Sah maka-tabang in media bang di sila mag-concentrate ha pag report sin kangii-an na sadja sin mga Muslims di ha hula...Gaam man kita sumusa na bang bihan in news kita in kugdanan sin karupangan nila”* (The Christians have been desperate after the series of kidnappings here in Sulu. But the media can help if it would refrain from reporting only destructive news about the Muslims here especially if it is unconfirmed...These kind of reports only make us

more desperate. We become the targets of the unscrupulous), revealed Mary Jane.

The Christian co-authors were unhappy about the status of the war rehabilitation programs. Jose for instance was complaining about the limited news concerning this issue because he believed that it is the responsibility of the media to air the problems concerning its implementation. “The few stories that we get from the tri-media are vague and apparently pro-government in the sense that reports usually have positive remarks of some of these questionable projects,” he commented. Jose clarified that the programs should have been directed to all Muslim and Christian war victims in Mindanao conflict areas but they were accordingly left in the dark when these were implemented. He claimed that a number of those who were given livelihood loans were not MNLF members and not even farmers or fishermen but relatives and friends of project implementors. “And now,” he continued “they are the ones cutting each other’s throat when they cannot pay the loans while others just evaporated conveniently.” *“Masakit ha atay nato ha bang in manusya kiya-mulahan tu-od ha pag-bunoh way kiya-tabangan sin parenta. In ta-od sin kiya-sunogan, kiya-lawan hinang, kiya-matayan sah in kata-uran sin kiiya-rihilan loans, dayahan piya-hinang baay iban piya-mii sa-sakatan in siin. Biya-di-in in pag-livelihood? Asal way rah gimuwa ha news in problems ini...”* (It is heartbreaking to see that many of those who truly suffered the 1974 war were not aided by the

government. A number of them were *fire* victims who lost their homes, jobs, families but failed to avail of the assistance. Instead those who benefited were the rich who constructed their homes and bought cars. What happened to the livelihood programs? These problems never came out of the press...), Jose clarified.

#### *Muslim Joloano Co-Authors*

The mass media have not penetrated much of the different sectors of the Muslim populace in Sulu especially among the elderly. The common folks have a vague idea of the role of the tri-media. Newspapers are rarely sold for a number of Joloanos do not have the economic means to subscribe. Many from the upland are unable to read thereby learning about the war issues by word-of-mouth. On the other hand majority of them utilize the television and the radio basically for entertainment purposes. A few subscribers of news find that news reporting lack relevance and sufficiency in terms of educating and informing the Joloanos of the recent issues of the Mindanao conflict. This kind of orientation towards the media as suggested from the discussions of the co-authors implied a growing information gap between the Muslim Joloanos of Sulu and the rest of the country.

Babu Arag confessed that the source of her knowledge about the conflict in Sulu and the rest of Mindanao is by word-of-mouth. "There is really no need for me to spend and besides I can rely on the accuracy of

the story from the people I trust,” explained Babu Arag. It is seldom according to her that you find folks in the upland reading the “katas habal” (newspaper). The tao gimba (upland folks) would prefer komiks because they do not have to read the illustrations and they are entertained at the same time. Whenever she visited down town Jolo she confided she would indulge in watching “Eat Bulaga” and FPJ action films from the VHS. *“Awam kitah sin ARMM atawa peace talk daying ha katas-habal iban TV. Asal dah di kitah maka-hati sin bitsara sin mga tao yan ha parenta. Malugay na kita nag-tatagad sin karayawan pag-iyanon ”autonomy” sah way rah napinda ha Jolo puas pag-sunog. Hangkan da maliso kita dumungog sin pag-iyanon news”*(We are ignorant of the issues of ARMM and the peace talk from the newspaper and TV. Just the same we have a hard time understanding the talks coming from the government in the news. We have long waited for the promise of “autonomy” and improvements to take place after the *burning* of Jolo but nothing has changed. That is why we don’t bother to listen to news), explained Babu Arag.

Being a subscriber of news reports Hamba gets to learn of the development of the peace talks from the newspapers and TV. He admits he was joyful of the agreement between the government and the MNLF in the Tripoli especially after the ARMM was established. It was therefore frustrating to have expected so much for so little. *“Biya-di-in in manusya kuug-gan bang dii nila ka-kita-an in piyag-i-sonan sin*

*parenta iban sin mga nakurah. Way rah tu-od sila na-iig ha kasigpit iban way rah napinda in pag-paraagan sin parakala di ha lupa. Subay maka-tabang in media ha pag-pahati ha mga nakurah nato ha guwa sin दौरा बांग उनोह in status sin ARMM iban बांग awon ba improvements nahinang di ha lupa..”* (How can we expect the people here to be glad when they don’t see visible changes for the better as proposed between the government and our leaders. They have remained poor and the same system of running the place has continued. The media can help by updating the national government of the status of the ARMM aside from the need to have its own monitoring mechanism to see if there are really improvements taking place here...), Hamba disclosed.

Abdil confided that even with so much news coming from the media about the conflict nothing has changed for the better. The Joloanos he claimed are still hungry and many are jobless. Ironically even with the so-called ARMM which he admitted has always been a vague concept did nothing to alleviate their worries.

Coming from an educated lady, Alona’s reaction was heavy with regret. If the news she maintained would only be lies than it is better to hear nothing. Her family she confided would prefer to watch a tele-novela or a noontime show for it makes them laugh. She is convinced that the news has always been favorable to the government and few reports of developments have been visible. For example, she claimed

that news about the rehabilitation program of the government were oftentimes inaccurate. They would often suggest success even when the operation failed. She claimed that most of those who benefited are family or friends of the project implementors. Like their Christian counterpart, Alona thought this should be told to the public for the government to take proper action. “What is the point of helping out war victims when the beneficiaries were not really victim?. Many suffered loss in the hands of the military or deprived of their lands during the 1974 upheaval and yet were not given assistance,” commented Alona. Muksan reacted on news which he believed are often personality rather than issues-oriented and most of these people he claimed are not even known to them. “Why should an ordinary Joloano spend his hard-earned money to read about somebody or something not known to him?” declared Muksan. Perhaps if the news is about the alarming rate of unemployment and illiteracy, the proliferating drug trafficking especially after the 1974 siege, the inefficiency of the ARRM and how these should be addressed by the government, the newspapers in Sulu would sell, reasoned Muksan.

Nuraiza the outspoken female among the younger group criticized the ethical aspect of news report saying that news stories are usually replete with *stereotypes* not good for the Muslim image. One of the many consequences is the animosity it builds towards the Muslims by whoever gets to read the news she declared. For instance, whenever

she walks wearing her head dress “*turong*” with her family in the streets of Manila in one of those rare chances, she will be asked by some people “are you *Abu Sayaf* members?” This she believes is the effect of too much negative emphasis given by the news associating banditry with the Muslims in general. The news she claims should be balanced by constructive reports about Mindanao. Over and above the stories of pain and fightings there are other news items which are worth reporting about like perseverance, valor and pride of both Christian and Muslim Joloano war survivors who continued to thrive in conflict areas despite the odds.

Hussein questions the usefulness of the Mindanao peace talks when people directly concerned and exposed to conflicts are not well-informed of the agenda and objectives discussed between the government and their leaders. For example, he stressed even after the implementation of the ARMM the people have not commonly agreed on the definition of “*autonomy*.” Conciliation and dialogue are meaningful only if the sentiments of the people are truly heard. Presently he thinks the media has been evading its duty by turning a blind eye on what is happening. He believed the press, the television and the radio can work miracles in helping the down-trodden war survivors tell their own stories of loss, continued harassments and failed projects to prompt the government and outside communities finally to take the matter of the Mindanao problem seriously.

Table 11. Reactions to Media War Issues

Christian Joloano War Survivors	Muslim Joloano War Survivors
The media have not provided the venue for a <i>dialogue</i> between the war victims and the government.... –Jose	<i>Eat Bulaga</i> makes us laugh a lot. There's little to watch about the war in the news besides <i>lies</i> only make us feel bad –Alona
News reports <i>fail to tackle the 'meat'</i> of the <i>problems</i> in conflict areas e.g. poverty and neglect of the government. –Jose	The Media is popular as a source of <i>entertainment</i> than newsmakers of relevant war issues. –Muksan
News of the <i>Tripoli</i> insufficient to enlighten the ordinary Joloano war victim.- Petrona	The <i>Tripoli</i> , the <i>ARMM</i> and the <i>peace process</i> are <i>seldom</i> featured in the news.-Alona
Reports about the <i>ARMM</i> and the issue of ' <i>autonomy</i> ' not comprehensive enough to clear misconceptions.- Ronald	Media <i>reports</i> on <i>peace talks</i> have <i>not brought</i> concrete <i>improvements</i> in conflict areas. –Hussein
News reports are <i>manila-centered</i> e.g. metro politics, fashion, trends and showbusiness –Peter	Media <i>seldom</i> portray newsworthy <i>human interest</i> stories of the <i>experiences</i> and <i>predicament of war victims</i> . -Nuraiza
TV program <i>entertainment-oriented</i> less on war issues. <i>Eat Bulaga</i> and <i>Mulawin</i> popular among Joloanos than news on Mindanao. –Petrona	Media <i>cater</i> to the <i>educated and employed</i> who have the facility to understand and spend. It is costly for upland folks who rely merely on word of mouth for news of war. -Hamba
Propensity of news for the <i>sensational</i> affect the on-going peace process e.g. " <i>Moro-villain and Christian-victim syndrome</i> ." –Sharon	The <i>implementation</i> and <i>evaluation</i> of war programs are <i>seldom reported</i> by the media. -Alona
News on Mindanao Peace Talks highly <i>technical</i> for ordinary readers in Jolo. -Peter	News stories are <i>heavy</i> on <i>Muslim stereotypes</i> e.g. Abu Sayaf terrorist acts and banditry seemingly attributed to Muslims. -Nuraiza
The Joloanos' <i>level of literacy</i> affects their <i>understanding</i> of war issues in the news. -Romeo	Media war issues <i>pro-government</i> . News focused on what were implemented which are <i>not even visible</i> in the community – Hussein
Media show <i>partiality</i> . Reports are <i>silent</i> on atrocities of the military and failed government <i>war rehabilitation projects</i> .- Jose	There is less news on relevant issues about the war. <i>More</i> on <i>personalities</i> . – Muksan

## 2. On the Other Concepts of War

By virtue of having co-existed under the same local system of governance, social and economic set up they are known as Joloanos. The few Christian settlers who came to Sulu as early as in the 1920s and have later multiplied were familiar with the stories of the Spanish



conquest of the province and have witnessed much of the transitions in the American administration of the Muslims from a mailed-fist to a velvet glove policy of integration. These Christians were much a part of the history of Sulu as any native born Muslims. And through the years the Christian and Muslim Joloanos have shared perceptions legitimized by their common institutionalizing agents.

The reactions of the co-authors were complimentary considering that most of them acknowledged the fact that during the 1974 mutiny and thereafter both Christians and Muslims who took the frontline in the fights have shown a craving for power. Beyond the struggle however is the latent desire to reach a compromise evidenced among others by the establishment of the *Bangsamoro* a concept that attempted to accommodate the tri-people (Christians, Muslims and lumads) of Mindanao in search for “autonomy”. This was followed by series of negotiations entered into between the GRP and the Muslim rebels and the locally initiated dialogues among the Joloanos. Thus, in a summary their responses can be stated as follows: *There was power play and desire for control during the war but the need to reconcile between the Christians and Muslims is there.*

*The Christian Joloano Co-Authors*

Jose is convinced that there was power play and the fight for territorial supremacy was equally evident from the Muslim freedom fighters and the Christian soldiers of the government. He nevertheless blamed the leaders of both sides for having resorted to war and blown things out of proportion. It was according to him a fight that could have been avoided if a dialogue was initiated sincerely between parties earlier on. Innocent lives could have been saved if the arrogance of the warring parties did not prevail. *“In dii ko sadja kaha-tihan bang mayta complete autonmy in kabaya-an sin kaibanan manusya Muslims. Inii in maka-mula sawab misan in kata-uran manusya dii way naka-hati bang unoh in lagi. Asal misan in ARMM kunoh way rah nahinang.”* (What I cannot seem to understand is why some Muslim fighters would want complete autonomy. This becomes a problem because many Muslims here do not even understand the concept. What is the point, they say when the ARMM has not even seemed to provide the answer to autonomy), Jose observed. In all honesty he admitted that his familiarity with the people and the place would support his disagreement of the general belief that Christians and Muslims cannot co-exist well. We had a good relation in the past and this can be a solid basis for believing that we can continue working for a better and more meaningful partnership. In a slightly different stance Petrona believed that the Muslims during the mutiny

never wanted absolute control. *“How can the Muslims have wanted absolute control when they were the ones being neglected?”* asked Petrona. The Maoists (Muslim rebels) were convinced that the government through the marines and the army were bent on depriving them of the *Bangsamoro*, their ancestral homeland. Many Maoists she claimed sacrificed their lives young and old to protect what was theirs. The soldiers she confessed exhibited abuse of powers which stimulated sparks of defiance among the Muslims. After all is said and done, Petrona like Jose rely on the friendship of both cultures in the past as a vestige of hope that can be revived with perseverance on both sides. *“Way limingkat sin pag-agad sin Christians iban Muslims tagna. Bang way naka-lamud in ngii sin parenta hi Marcos naka-una iban sin dahal ha alta iban kasañang sin kaibanan manusia way hatiko limago in kalo inii...”* (The relationship between Christians and Muslims in the past has never been that good. If not for the weakenedness of the Marcos government and other power hungry personalities, the problem could have not worsened...), Petrona rationalized. Romeo as usual strongly expressed his views without necessarily opposing. He likewise agreed that control was present on both sides but he clarified that complete power is what the Muslims wanted even when most fighters were simply misguided by the distorted beliefs of their leaders. He was uncertain however of the possibility of a peaceful co-existence saying that it can only happen when either side gives in.

“It was Marcos who wanted absolute control,” claimed Sharon from the middle-aged group. Marcos accordingly was clever enough to have revived the hostility among the people. Like what she was telling in her narrative, Marcos capitalized on the so-called cultural divide occasioned by the colonial invasion and started agitating insurrection among the natives to create an atmosphere of unrest. Sharon could not find it in herself to suspect the Muslims especially the Samals who are gentle folks of the sea to have wanted “absolute control.” The military on the other hand were dictated by Marcos and obviously aimed to dominate. Thus, the contempt of most Muslims towards the Christian military naturally extended to the Christian public.

Allan’s response was straightforward although he was also convinced of the need for control and dominance from the feuding parties. As a young adult his response is focused on the present reality which surprisingly speaks until now more than ever of the active involvement of the *Magic Eight* in the present race for power in the province. Control is what these people wanted even in the past when they were lured to power by Marcos and were persuaded to turn their back on their own people, the MNLF. Now, some of them still call the shots and nobody complains because they have their *guns, goons* and *gold*.

Mary Jane, another young adult participant however looks at the problem from another context. Although nationwide the Christians

constitute the majority population but in Sulu they are plainly outnumbered by the Muslims. That is why she cannot reconcile the fact that it is possible for the Christians to even contemplate on dominating the Muslims. *“Biya-di-in kita maka pikil sin pag-dominate bang tiyo-tiyo rah kitah? Ampa kita na sadja in target sin kidnapping., yan in maka-mula”* (How can we even think of dominating when we are outnumbered? What’s pathetic is that we even have become targets of kidnap for ransom), clarified Mary Jane.

Peter was thinking of his commitment to become a convert “balik Islam” when he mentioned that he strongly believed in the goodwill of men and therefore is hopeful of a sincere conciliation between Christians and Muslims. Although, he declared it would be difficult to bring back exactly the kind of relationship we had in the past, there is hope. Like Petrona he claims there are many others who have enjoyed a good marriage with “the other” culture. He even confessed of his marriage proposal to a young Muslim maiden further signifying the fact that it is not really impossible to like and appreciate one another if the intentions are pure.

#### *The Muslim Joloano Co-Authors*

Jikirani believed that it was not the intention of the Muslim folks to fight in the 1974 mutiny just for show of strength. The Muslims suffered more he claimed because they were harassed and threatened by

soldiers incessantly for no cause. “Bukon kita in namunoh kita in biyunoh. Mayta kita dii umatoh bang patayon kita misan way dusah nato? Biya sin naka-una pag-iyanon sin kamaa-asan di kapangandulan in Christian bisaya. Sila in nag-ba-baya makawa in Bangsa nato” (We did not start the trouble, we were provoked. Why shouldn’t we resist when we were being killed for no reason. Like what many of our elders would say, even in the past the Christian Bisaya cannot be trusted. They have always wanted to take control of our lands), confided Jikirani. Hamba likewise think there was yearning for control and domination. He emphasize with Jikirani saying that he perhaps had reasons for his contempt towards the military and some priests but not all Christians should be blamed because they too suffered. In fact Hamba disclosed he too was victimized by some of his Muslim colleagues at the height of the mutiny and lost his job as a consequence. Like Jose and Petrona Hamba recollected what the Joloanos relationship was prior to the siege. *“Way pa nag-bubuno asal marayaw na in pag-agad sin Muslims iban Christians. In kata-uran improvements nahinang sin mga Joloanos Muslims iban Christians. Bukon control in baya sin manusya Muslim kiya-sigpitan iban bukon domination in baya sin ka-taan Christians. Marayaw in pag-a-agad nato taga. Malago in chances maka-pag-sulot dah kita”* (Prior to the siege Christians and Muslims went along well and a lot improvement here in Sulu were initiated by both. I believe that not all war weary Muslims fought for control neither did the

Christians wanted to dominate us. We have had a good start therefore chances are we can eventually settle peacefully), Hamba revealed.

Muksan the middle-aged barter trader agreed with Hamba's story of the past pleasant relationship between the Muslims and Christians in Sulu. In fact he recounted how a number of Christians who were born in the province became converts (balik Islam) by choice and married Muslims. The problem with some Muslims according to Muksan is their tendency to have a narrow yardstick in measuring things like what Hadja Fatima was saying. "It is hard to change their ways of thinking especially about Christians," commented Muksan. A good Muslim especially a leader should have the "kusog" (strength) to bring people together and spread prosperity to everyone regardless of race or region, Muksan elaborated.

Hussein from the young batch of Muslims was very vocal about his vision of stronger partnership between the Christians and Muslims. Even when Muslims feel aggravated he feels there is no need to show defiance. "Di da ma-unoh bang di kitah umatoh." Not all of those who fight show courage. Sometimes arrogance is mistaken for courage so it is better to avoid than to collide for the key to peace is humility. From this premise Hussein thinks that to some extent the Muslims demonstrated arrogance and therefore wanted control during the siege and so did the Christian soldiers. The present conflicts he claimed would imply the same story of arrogance pointing to some rich and influential

ex-rebels who yearn for power and prestige thereby terrorizing their people. Some military on the other hand continued actualizing their dirty missions. This set-up believed Hussein should not make us lose hope. Many Joloanos he declared have shown their commitment to peace by intensifying “pag-suwarh” with sectors in the community. From the young adult this bold response showed strength of spirit and faith in a relationship.



Table 12. Reactions to the “Other Concepts of War”

Christian Joloano War Survivors	Muslim Joloano War Survivors
The 1974 war manifested a <i>fight</i> for <b>territorial supremacy</b> . Both the government and the MNLF <i>wanted control</i> _-Jose.	<i>We did not start the trouble. We were provoked.</i> Why should we not resist when the soldiers will kill for no reasons? –Jikirani
Several <i>Muslim</i> fighters were <i>misguided</i> by their leaders who <b>aimed for control</b> .- Romeo	<b>Not all Christians</b> were part of the <b>oppressive forces</b> even <i>Muslims conspired</i> for position and power.- Hamba
How can the <b>Muslims</b> have wanted control when they were the ones being <b>neglected</b> ? -Petrona	The atmosphere for <b>oppression</b> was <b>contagious</b> . The opportunists took advantage of the crisis.- Hamba
<i>Colonial oppression</i> and <b>Marcos’ abuses</b> of the Muslims <b>provoked</b> the mutiny. –Sharon	Some Muslim rebels ( <i>the Magic Eight</i> ) <b>conspired</b> with the instigators of war. –Muksan
It was <b>Marcos</b> who wanted absolute control with his <b>“divide and rule”</b> policy through the military. –Peter	<b>Marcos</b> gave the <i>conflict</i> a <b>religious color</b> by inciting fights between Christian military and Muslim rebels. –Alona
The <b>Magic Eight</b> (Muslim ex-rebels) who conspired with Marcos also aimed for control. – Allan	Both <b>Muslims and Christians</b> have initiated a lot of <b>improvements</b> in Sulu before the mutiny indicating a peaceful co-existence. --Hamba
After the war many <b>feuding</b> wealthy <b>Muslims</b> became <b>oppressors</b> of their own people.-Ronald	Many <b>Christians were born and raised in Jolo</b> . A number have married Muslims and became <i>balik Islam</i> (Muslims converts). -Hussein
After the war some Muslims resorted to <b>banditry</b> as a form of <i>control</i> . –Marie Jane	The soldiers and some Muslim fighters <b>allowed themselves to be exploited</b> . They were both responsible for their own predicament- Hadja Fatima
The <b>Christians never</b> wanted to <b>dominate</b> the Muslims. In Jolo <b>few</b> are Christians. -.Marie Jane	<b>Not all Muslims</b> who fought aimed for <b>control</b> <i>neither</i> did all <b>Christians</b> want to <b>dominate</b> .- Alona
<i>Christians and Muslims</i> used to have <b>good relationship</b> prior to 1974 war. –Jose	Many <i>Muslim fighters</i> <i>perished</i> during the war because of <b>misconceptions</b> and false promises by our own <i>leaders</i> . Nuraiza
Christians’ <b>desire for peace</b> is evidenced by active involvement of the church and the young ones in <b>peace advocacy</b> at present. -Eric	A <i>good Muslim leader</i> has the <b>‘barakat’</b> (power) to bring the Muslims and Christians together towards <b>prosperity</b> . –Muksan
<b>Mixed marriages</b> among Christians and Muslims strongly manifest proclivity towards a <b>closer relationship</b> . -Petrona	The interest of the <i>young Muslims</i> to engage in a <b>dialogue</b> or <b>pag-suwarah</b> suggests a peaceful future for Muslims and Christians.- Hussein

## **B. Culture-Bound Realities**

### **1. On the Concept of Religious War**

Their responses have shown differences in emphasis and arguments because they are taken from central beliefs institutionalized by distinct cultural notions of the war. Among Christian co-authors there were dissimilar reactions evidenced by their uncertainty of the true practise of “jihad” among the Muslims. They have in comparison attempted to describe the concept of “waging war” from the Christian viewpoint saying that their religion does not in any occasion allow war as an option to defend their faith. War from the Christian co-authors’ arguments suggested a political rather than a religious concept and therefore is not willed by just any individual but by the state as sanctioned by the statutes of the land.

Apparently guided by their norms, the Muslim co-authors’ reactions to the issue of “jihad” were spoken from a context that pointed to a common belief- that a religious war is possible as a defensive war. When faith is threatened because the mujahid (believer) is persecuted then war can be resorted to as a collective effort. The 1974 mutiny however was seen by the co-authors from different interesting angles depending on where they are positioned socially or economically. From the narratives of some elderly co-authors for example they have included in the definition of “jihad” the political and economic struggles of the 1974 mutiny therefore believing it was a religious battle. While another

co-author attempted to distinguish a political revolution from a religious war claiming that the upheaval in 1974 was not a “jihad” but a revolution. The rest maintained that the mutiny was not a “jihad” given the circumstances. They however did not discredit the fact the going to battle is possible under certain cases. In any event it is evident from the discussions of the Muslim co-authors that waging a war is an option among Muslims. In a nutshell the opposing reactions of the co-authors can be summarized as follows: *To fight or not to fight in defense of a religion.*

#### *Christian Joloano Co-Authors*

Romeo was certain it was a “*jihad*.” That was his personal assessment of the event. “Shortly before the siege, I really saw how a number of Muslims would gather and talk in the marketplace, in the streets, and even in school. I would often notice how they would crowd inside the “kaddai” (coffeshop) with several “tablig” (Muslim preacher) preaching about militant Islam. They were Arabs, Iranians or Palestinians mostly foreigners. Activism was notorious that time and many Muslims were convinced because of the band wagon mentality.” Romeo revealed. He was insistent that the religious implication of the mutiny was strong because he would even hear radio announcers inciting the Muslims “to wage a *jihad* because the time has come,” Romeo added. Petrona on the other hand being married to a Muslim

claimed she did not think so and offered to clarify by saying that “the religious element of the conflict would appear strong, nevertheless the mutiny was not religious.” Even if she professed Catholicism she stressed that she knows a few important things about “jihad.” “In Christianity,” she declared that “war is not allowed because the church does not interfere with the prerogative of the state. Nowhere can war be taken as an option to fight persecution against our faith but in Islam it is allowed.” Petrona however thought that those who joined the mutiny had strong personal reasons. “Some lost their husbands, sons or brothers even before the war. They were mostly apprehended by the military never to be seen again...” she recounted.

Peter, a middle-aged participant felt the hostility rising between the Muslim and Christian Joloanos at the height of the upheaval. His old friend Bapa Hassan was even prevented from bringing him to school which he used to do. Bapa was later found mutilated a few days after he was arrested by the soldiers. He was advised to refrain from socializing with his Muslim friends. Surprisingly, the 1974 war did not ingrain in him negative impressions of the Muslims. In fact his priority now is to actualize his desire of becoming a balik Islam (convert) as a personal commitment even before he started courting a Muslim maiden. “To my mind the fight in 1974 and the continuing clashes in Sulu today do not have any religious color. It is social unrest brought about by Marcos’

dictatorship compounded by present power play that resulted to the extreme poverty of our people.”

Allan has no doubt the siege was not religious. He declared that one indication that the 1974 war was not religious was the fact that the Muslims never lost their freedom to practice their faith even at the height of the upheaval. They were never prevented from praying or expressing their Islamic beliefs, “Bang awon incidents sin pag-bombings sin mosques hinang ini sin mga dupang mabaya mag-palago kalo sin mga manunya dii ha Sug...” (If there were bombing incidents of mosques, these apparently were deliberate attempts to provoke conflict between Muslims and Christians..), Allan explained. “It is true that the war was more political than religious,” Allan claimed. Like Jose, Allan agreed it was a joust for territorial and political supremacy. And if negotiations were made much earlier between the government and the rebels there could have been few casualties.

*Muslim Joloano Co-Authors*

Babu Arag was convinced that the 1974 mutiny was “jihad.” She verbalized her sentiments by saying, *”Di masu-son in manusia Muslim bang mag-jihad sawab imatoh sila ha mga kasigpit piyag-mulahan ha mga sundalo. Asal yan ha agama Islam in panga-hagari maka-pag jihad kita bang awon dapat. Bang in lupa natoh Bangsamoro in agawon na sin parenta daying kato...mayta di kitah umatoh. Hangkan dah way ako nag-su-son naka-lamud in bannah iban anak usog ko ha pag-bunoh sawab kiya agawan kami lupa. Sari na asal da miyatay sila ha pag-jihad...”* (The Muslim fighters cannot be blamed for having joined the “jihad” in 1974 because of the abuses suffered from the government and the soldiers, It is allowed by virtue of Islam for Muslims to wage a jihad when there is a cause. The fact that our land- the Bangsamoro is being taken from us why should we not resist? I did not regret when my husband including a son joined and died in the mutiny...), recounted Babu Arag. Partly agreeing to what Babu Arag stated, Hamba presented his case saying that it is true under extreme case “jihad” can be waged by our people but not at all times. The death of several Joloanos according to Hamba was lamentable. “There were good reasons to have resisted the soldiers for the atrocities the Muslims sustained and endured. But nevertheless the mutiny was done for political and personal reasons and not in the name of Islam strictly speaking,” Hamba

expounded. It is understandable he believed for many Muslims to make assumptions about “jihad” since Islam does not delineate a clear division between what is political, economic, or social. It is a faith, according to Hamba that is all-embracing.

Alona agreed with Hamba’s point of view adding that the slaying of several Muslims in the notorious Jabidah massacre might have strongly shown religious or ethnic color but in actuality it was more of a political controversy. But this was what Marcos made to appear. The mutiny Alona believed was a political struggle between Marcos and some Muslim leaders. And so the Muslim freedom fighters joined a political battle.

Speaking out his opinion from the youngest group Hussein’s reaction complimented that older ones saying that the siege was more of a political struggle that could have been prevented by “pag-suwara.” The upheaval in the past he emphasized is no different from the present conflict wherein communication should pave the way for clearing false impressions between two cultures. According to Hussein it is not really important to differentiate between what is a religious or a political war because “war” in whatever name speaks of ending lives and the result is always tragic.

Table 13. Reactions on the Concept of Religious War

<i>The war was unnecessary...</i> It could have been avoided. –Jose	<i>The war was inevitable...</i> It was bound to happen. –Babu Arag
<i>Nowhere</i> in the <i>Catholic faith</i> can <i>war</i> be taken as an option <i>against religious</i> persecution. –	<i>‘Jihad’</i> as a religious war is <i>allowed</i> in Islam as a <i>defensive war</i> against oppressors of Islam. –

Petrona	Hamba
<b>Christians</b> do <i>not wage a war</i> in that sense. -Petrona	“We <i>cannot</i> be <i>blamed</i> for having fought a <i>jihad</i> in 1974. The Muslims were being killed and the Bangsamoro taken from us..” -Jikirani
There were strong <i>indications</i> that the 1974 mutiny in Jolo was <i>religious</i> . –Romeo	“I did not regret when my husband and a son joined and perished in the battle. They <i>fought</i> a <i>jihad</i> to <i>retrieve the land</i> we lost...” -Babu Arag
The <i>active participation</i> of the religious leaders like the imam and the tablig ( <i>Muslim preachers</i> ) in the uprising prior to and during the siege was evident. –Romeo	“The <i>priests</i> and the <i>government soldiers</i> <i>conspired</i> to have me arrested for a crime I did not do. Like what the elders say the Christian Bisaya are not worthy of trust...” -Jikirani
There were signs that the war was <b>religiously motivated</b> but it was not religious. Some instigators of the conflict made it appear that way. –Petrona	Muslim military trainees were victims in the <i>Jabidah Massacre</i> . It was an affront against the <i>Ummah (Muslim community)</i> giving the incident a religious and cultural meaning. -Alona
The <i>Jabidah Massacre</i> in 1968 was believed by the Muslims to be a heinous offense against their religion and culture. –Ronald	<i>Marcos</i> was <i>behind</i> the so-called religious conflict between the MNLF and the soldiers killing a number of innocent civilians.-Alona
“I felt the <i>hostility</i> in the <i>70’s</i> even as a child when I would be prevented from socializing with Muslims. No ill-feelings towards them lingered in me. It was not a religious fight...” -Peter	Some Muslims also aimed for control and power. The <i>‘Magic Eight’</i> (ex-rebels) after they were granted amnesty had their share in the upheaval strongly indicating that the fight was not religious or cultural –Muksan
The <i>animosity</i> felt by many Muslims then against the <i>military</i> affected the Christian populace giving the fight a <i>religious color</i> . -Jose	The death of several Muslim fighters was lamentable. Their <i>reasons</i> for fighting may <i>not</i> be <i>religious</i> but were equally grave. -Hamba
The <i>bombing incidents</i> added a religious dimension to the conflict in 1974 when mosques exploded and several Muslims were killed. –Peter	Muslim fighters joined a <i>revolution not a jihad</i> . People suffered yet the struggle was among the ambitious leaders. Christian and Muslim civilians were innocent bystanders.-Alona
One indication that the war was <i>not religious</i> was the fact that the Muslims never lost their freedom to exercise their faith. –Allan	The reasons for the <i>fight</i> may be <i>personal</i> . But our people had <i>valid</i> grounds for resisting. Some sought <i>redress</i> for murder others for dispossession of their land. -Hamba
The uprising in 1974 was a <i>political struggle</i> rather than religious. Even now the battles continue for <i>political rivalry</i> . –Eric	War continues against two major enemies: <i>wrong beliefs</i> about <i>jihad</i> and <i>poverty</i> . <i>Pag-suwara (dialogue)</i> is essential to erase misconceptions –Nuraiza.

## 2. On the Concept of Conciliation

### and the Mindanao Peace Process



One neglected issue in the Mindanao peace process is the concept of “conciliation.” From the discussions of the co-authors there are some considerations that should be examined seriously from the Christian and Muslim war survivors’ notions of the existing peace talks which are crucial to understanding the responses of the local folks towards the peace agreement.

From the start of the peace talks, the Christian co-authors have expressed a feeling of detachment from what has been taking place. They claim that ever since the Tripoli Agreement was initiated from which the concept of “autonomy” was introduced the focus was on the Muslims. Even with the conceptualization of the *Bangsamoro* as a unifying idea to cluster the different ethnic groups in Mindanao, the Christians never played an active part in actualizing the so-called “autonomy,” the co-authors commented. They are therefore passive actors in the peace process since the major roles belong to the Muslims. Nevertheless since they are constituents of the ARMM they feel bound by the provisions of the organic law on autonomy as sanctioned by the Philippine constitution. Thus, they subscribe with what the government has undertaken in the peace talks as part of the process of conciliation in Mindanao.

On the part of the Muslim co-authors however there were local meanings of “pag-sulot” or conciliation which they believed have to be considered by the government for the peace process to progress.

Surprisingly, most of them likewise feel alienated with the way the peace talks are being undertaken between the government and their so-called representatives. They claim that even now the concept of “autonomy” has never been resolved because they did not envision it the way it is being realized in the ARMM. What the people need at present they say is for the government to address their social problems like unemployment, insufficient shelter, education, and food. Despite the *war rehabilitation programs* of the government nothing much has been improved after the 1974 upheaval, the co-authors observed. The ARMM plainly speaking has not provided the solutions to their problems, the co-authors claimed. In the local practice “pag-sulot” would mean the government through the local officials coming directly to the people to settle disputes with their chosen representatives. It means an immediate appropriation of their needs as found viable by the elders or their leaders. It could be in the form of land retrieval which they believed was taken from them during the mutiny as one example. The local definition of settlement is direct, immediate, sincere and inspired by their chosen authority. The *Mindanao peace process* which is slow-moving according to the co-authors sounded remote to them. The objective which is “autonomy” has suddenly become vague. And their supposedly representatives seemed to be representing their own interest, the co-authors revealed. In short the ambivalent responses of the two core

groups pointed to this question: “*Are we a part of the Mindanao conciliation process?*”

*Christian Joloano Co-Authors*

Petrona narrated that the Mindanao peace process started well with the people in Sulu. Somehow, it gradually lost its meaning when it became clear that the terms and conditions of conciliation between the government and the MNLF did not agree what the people really need. This could be one reason, she believed why the MNLF is no longer popular among the people. They no longer carry the sentiments of their people. The concept of the Mindanao peace talks is alright Petrona thinks because at least the interest of both parties to compromise is there. But the conciliation should try to discuss real life problems of the people in conflict areas. For instance, it should check on the performance of the ARMM. It is commonplace now added Petrona to hear teachers complain about the delay in their salaries here in the ARMM. The same thing happens with their GSIS loans. What is needed Petrona believed is time and more dialogue with the people to find out how the ARMM for instance, can be improved.

Jose was disappointed with the vague role the Christians have in the ARMM region. And even after several peace talks were undertaken he never felt relieved with the what came out of the agreements. His notion of conciliation like Petrona visualizes sincere efforts on the part

of the negotiating parties to come out with concrete results that would address the problems of victims in the war areas. The method of conciliation according to him may be long and arduous but constant consultations with the people should be made in earnest. This is where the Mindanao peace process failed according to Jose. "It started out with lots of firecrackers and noises. Now, its silence is alarming. There is no telling if the government is still interested to negotiate when it has turned mummied," he explained. It is true claimed Jose that among the young ones the concept of dialogue has become popular even among the Muslim teenagers. But among the older Muslim folks some local practice of conciliation or "pag-sulot" still carry with it harsh elements of the past tradition. The negotiation would essentially require material compensation for the aggrieved in any conflict. Jose believed that the implication of this towards the on-going peace process is important if not direct- that without material and immediate consideration most Muslims would not easily settle a score. And besides a long term conciliation does not speak well with the people. That is why some Muslims would try to even the score by engaging in "rido" or vengeance if the agreement is not met. According to Jose, perhaps this explains why many Muslims were frustrated after not having benefited immediately from the ARMM following its implementation. "This kind of mentality among the Muslims can affect the peace process," Jose commented.

The Mindanao peace talks according to Peter do not only involve Christians and Muslims in Mindanao but Filipinos of the entire country. That is why even if the Christians in conflict areas according to Peter were apparently put off by the major roles granted to the Muslims in the Autonomous regions, the continuing efforts of the government to dialogue with them should be considered a milestone. The peace process was not entered into between the GRP and the MNLF/MILF overnight. There were series of consultation and assemblies that involved a lot of Muslims and Christians. The process was highly democratic allowing ethnic groups and sectors to be properly represented. According to Peter the essence of a true dialogue was there but as always towards the later part the spark has gone out and once again the negotiation is shelved. "Presently we are having a dead air, uncertain of what is to come next. We do not know how the Muslim community would take the long and arduous method of negotiating. We just hope that they exercise more patience in waiting when the next consultation will be," Peter disclosed.

Allan commented that the peace talks indeed made a lot of promises. He was impressed by the series of peace seminars, consultation meetings and trainings all over the country during its inception. At first, Allan claimed the government and the people's representatives really rallied for peace and worked hard until later when their personal interests consumed them. In effect, the Mindanao peace process can hardly be said to still carry the will of its people when their

woes are hardly heard. His idea of conciliation in the peace process would mean active involvement not only of the Muslims but the Christians in autonomy. Ronald views as imperative for the Mindanao peace process to take into account certain Muslim traditions which among the Christians do not necessarily apply. "It is true that conciliation among folks here requires a settlement to be in the material form or its equivalent as part of "pag-sulot," Ronald commented. In fact, he claims that the local government of Sulu helps settle disputes with the use of the IRA (Internal Revenue Allotment) at the barangay level. This effort of spending the provincial coffers for settling disputes became popular during the time of Governor Jikiri an ex-rebel-turned politician. It is thus essential to find out, if there is something in the tradition that would help in resolving the Mindanao conflict.

#### *Muslim Joloano Co-Authors*

True, declared Babu Arag conciliation should be immediate and appropriate for the aggrieved party to be relieved. When the land was taken from her family she thought the best relief was to demand for the return of her property or its material equivalent otherwise a confrontation like a physical battle could have ensued if her husband and son did not perish in the war. "Pag-sulot is an option for those who are willing to settle for less and "rido" (vengeance) for those who would like to get even," explained Arag. With the Mindanao peace talks Babu Arag

claims she does not feel like a part of it and that she's ignorant of what has transpired.

Jikirani was vocal enough to admit that among Muslims settlement or conciliation is easily resolved through "pag-sulot" whether it involves a small or a huge number of people. It oftentimes involves money or property to be pledged before witnesses and mediators so that the parties compensated would abandon the fight as a result of the agreement. If these are not observed claimed Jikirani war ensues and there is nothing to swear to protect before the Quran. The kind of negotiation taking place between the GRP and some Muslim leaders according to Jikirani is alien to him.

In addition Muksan claims that the process of conciliation in the community requires the participation of the elders and chosen leaders. It is essential for the parties to define clearly the object of conciliation or what ought to be accomplished as a form of retribution to end the trouble (rido or vengeance). It also requires an oath to be made before the Quran to ensure that the integrity of the parties. There is according to Muksan a big difference in the conciliation practiced among the local folks and the one in the Mindanao peace process. Some Muslim elders would say that it is because the object of the peace talks has become unclear and the parties' integrity has become questionable.

Hamba agrees with the views of Muksan saying that the on-going peace talks should incorporate some elements of "pag-sulot" to

make it more responsive to the tradition of the people. One important element of pag-sulot is grassroots' consultation with ordinary Muslims to find out if the *object* of conciliation still holds true with what the people really want to be accomplished in the peace agreement. Is "autonomy" what they really want? How would this be different from the present set-up? Another is by ascertaining that the representatives are well chosen by the people. If changes are needed to make the ARMM work well, Hamba declared, the leaders should know directly from the people.

In a straightforward manner Abdil remarked "If the ARMM can produce hundreds of employment in the community. Then there is no need for peace talks or pag-sulot. What we need are jobs not talks." Anyway he continued what is the use of talking when most our people will only be cutting each other's throat because of their volatile temper and pride. Abdil claimed further that in the Mindanao peace talks, conciliation should involve two sides."What side are we in? The MNLF speaks only for themselves and we are not on the side of the government for sure," raised Abdil.

Hussein furthermore commented on some local practice involving conciliation or "pag-sulot." It is true he disclosed that the common folks in Sulu would prefer to choose their leaders and elders to bargain with them in settling disputes big or small. And any agreement entered into by persons not of their choice is not acknowledged. The



object of conciliation should also be made clear before parties swear upon the Quran otherwise the agreement is nullified. The formality of settling disputes is part of a tradition that can sometimes cause a long-standing war between feuding families if not properly recognized. The Mindanao peace talks according to Peter should be no different from how disputes are settled in the locality. The representatives should be chosen by the people, the object of conciliation should be clear and the results immediate for the people to believe in the integrity of the bargain. Now, with the ARMM already in place the lack of material benefits the Muslims get from it have caused them to doubt its success as part of the peace initiative.

Table 14. Reactions to Conciliation and the Mindanao Peace Process

Christian Joloano War Survivors	Muslim Joloano War Survivors
<i>Only</i> the government and the <i>Muslims</i> are <i>parties</i> to the <i>peace negotiation</i> (GRP-MNLF) even when there are Christians in conflict areas. <i>We are not part of it.</i> –Romeo	<i>We don't feel like we are a part</i> of the negotiation (GRP-MNLF). A lot of our people are <i>ignorant</i> of what is going on... -Babu Arag
From the viewpoint of the Christian war survivors, the <i>peace process should work</i> both ways for the <i>Muslims</i> and <i>Christians</i> . -Jose	Conciliation should involve two sides. <i>What side are we in?</i> The MNLF speaks only for themselves and we are definitely not on the government side...-Abdil
The idea of <i>mediation</i> among Christians takes the western concept of a <i>long</i> or a <i>short term</i> agreement depending on the nature of the conflict.-Sharon	A <i>long term negotiation</i> like the on-going peace process would seem <i>incompatible</i> with the local practice of ' <i>pag-sulot</i> ' (conciliation) where visible resolutions are usually expected. –Hamba
From the start the Christian community was wondering what role we play in the conciliation process. Furthermore there is no clear resolution of "autonomy" in the ARMM and many are discontented with the present set up- Eric	Among ordinary Muslims the ARMM is <i>not</i> understood as <i>part</i> of a <i>long term conciliation</i> efforts in the absence of immediate and visible improvements. --Babu Arag
<b>We believe in conciliation for the good of the majority.</b> The Muslims seem to understand	<i>Ambivalence</i> in the definition of <i>autonomy</i> added complication to the controversy which the

conciliation from one side only- their side. –  
Romeo

*peace process* has *not resolved*  
-Nuraiza

Table 14 (Cont.). Reactions to Conciliation and the Mindanao Peace Process

Christian Joloano War Survivors	Muslim Joloano War Survivors
Perhaps there should be a <b>clear definition</b> of the <b>object of conciliation</b> in the peace process like the meaning of ‘ <b>autonomy</b> ’. Among Christians meanings are negotiated easily among Muslims it does not follow. -Sharon	<i>Disputes</i> are oftentimes <i>settled</i> in terms of <i>material relief</i> . <i>In default</i> conflict ensues. <b>ARMM</b> apparently <i>falls short</i> of the relief the Muslims seek thus the continued unrest. -Alona
Among Christians it is <b>preferable to settle amicably</b> or seek relief from courts. There is recognition of government authority. –Jose	Disputes are preferably settled <i>extra-judicially</i> by chosen elders or leaders. <i>Negotiators</i> to the <i>Mindanao peace process</i> are <b>not</b> exactly our <i>choice</i> . –Hussein
<b>Conciliation</b> means taking into account <b>mutual benefits</b> . For whose welfare are the peace talks being considered? The <b>Christians in the conflict areas don’t seem to have a say in the matter</b> - Ronald	The <i>local government</i> helps in settling local disputes with funds from the <i>Internal Revenue Allotment</i> (IRA) at the barangay level according to the tradition of pag-sulot. -Muksan
The <b>Christians</b> seem to be <b>more flexible</b> in <b>revising terms of agreement</b> if needed the Muslims seem less tolerant along this line. This perhaps affected the on-going peace talks – Allan	<i>Local practice</i> requires material <i>consideration</i> in settling disputes to <i>ensure</i> that parties uphold their part of the bargain and not purely for economic gain. –Hamba
Nevertheless the <b>tradition of pag-sulot</b> (conciliation) among the Muslims is <b>not completely strange</b> to us. Some Christians have to a certain degree imbibed the nuances in the community especially the converts and those who have married into the culture.- Petrona	Thus, <i>lack</i> of anticipated material <i>benefits</i> from <b>ARMM</b> after its initiation caused some Muslims to doubt success of peace process.. -Hussein

## II. Fantasy Themes in the 1974 Sulu Siege

*Fantasy* as applied in the study is by no means synonymous with “fiction.” It is more of a process undertaken by the co-authors as they engaged themselves in an “imaginative” and “creative” interpretation of the war that actually happened in Sulu in 1974 and other conflicts that followed. They have as a consequence found relief having “fulfilled a psychological and rhetorical need” (Bormann, 1994). The act can therefore be described as “emancipatory” as Krippendorff has earlier suggested in the sense that

their active participation in a series of “dialogues” unburdened them of tension, pain and other psychological trauma commonly encountered during the tragic incident.

The co-authors regardless of creed, age and religion have mentioned repeatedly the following “war scenarios” as they resurrected the ghosts of the past.

#### **A. A Love-Hate Relation**

The stories especially of the elders have spoken of a fruitful past with “the other” culture. They reminisced the good times when the peoples of Jolo, Christians and Muslims shared an easy camaraderie and mutual admiration. This symbiotic relationship was reflective of the economic progress Sulu used to have shortly after the American liberation towards the 1960s.

Jose, a Christian elder recalls of the peaceful moments when he was then courting his wife in the early 1950s. The whole town of Jolo he claimed never knew fear or anguish. Together with his friends, he would stroll in the night market and view the movies’ late shows. He would accompany the priests to say mass in the remote municipalities in the area. And his Samal friends would bring him fresh catch from the sea every morning. Petrona another Christian elder likewise fondly narrated how she fell hook-line-and-sinker with the “savage” looks and valiant manners of her Muslim husband despite warnings from her family. Romeo on the other hand never had *romantic notions* of the Muslims ever since his arrival in Jolo in the late 1950s unlike the native born Jose and Petrona. He was vocal about the tendency of the Muslim Joloanos to avoid getting formal education in the 1960s claiming they prefer to be in the

trading business. He nevertheless had some rich Muslim friends but refused to do business with them for fear of getting into trouble. From their Muslim counterparts, Hamba an elderly was grateful for his Christian mentors for their efforts of inspiring him no end to improve his profession. His positive association with them even brought him a Christian wife. Jikirani, the elderly Muslim fisherman might have started on the right track with his some of his friends from the church but unfortunately had some unfortunate encounter with them. He somehow admitted to have been shown their generosity when he was included in the livelihood project which later folded up after things have changed during the siege. *It was when the 1974 mutiny occurred that negative emotions and long-hidden prejudices seemed to have resurfaced once more coloring the perceptions of most of the elderly co-authors.* There were stories coming from the Christians that stones would be hurled at them by frenzied Muslim civilians at the height of the upheaval and shortly before the siege. From the Muslims, Jikirani and Babu Arag condemned the military atrocities and the Christians in general who were believed to be siding with the soldiers.

The middle-aged who were children then in the 1960s also shared pleasant memories of that period when an atmosphere of amiability was strongly felt in the province among Christians and Muslims. Sharon a Christian have witnessed the special friendship her father, a protestant minister had with the Samals. Peter used to be doted upon by Bapa Hassan their family driver by bringing him to the “kaddai” (eatery) for his favorite Muslim dish. This was before Bapa’s disappearance after he was arrested by the soldiers. His

continuous association with the Muslim despite the 1974 war and the on-going conflicts strengthened his desire to become a convert. From the Muslim group, Alona's marriage is one ideal example of an inter-cultural union that knows no bounds. She was literally threatened to be ostracized by her family and yet she chose an ex-seminarian for a husband. The upheaval for most middle-aged co-authors have in a sense changed their lives but not necessarily their attitude towards "the other" culture.

When the young-adult war survivors came into the picture, Sulu was no longer that beautiful and prosperous. The relationship they have with the other is primarily based on some vague stories from the past and the present circumstances that are nevertheless compounded with more troubles. This would be characterized as a struggling relation, uncertain but hopeful. The relation cannot exactly be described as one of friendship or hatred but the element of understanding is there. The tie that holds the young Christians and Muslims is their common and actual exposure to recent conflicts that are no less volatile than the war in the past. Their stories are now filled with bloody encounters between the military and the rebels and the constant feuding among families of the notorious *Magic Eight*. All the while they would acknowledge the presence of "the other" culture as co-survivors of war who are willing to "dialogue" for the sake of peace.

## **B. The Big Fire**

The Joloano war survivors' concept of devastation has been intensely associated with the "big fire" during the siege as the event repeatedly surfaced in their narratives. *It symbolized a finality – a culmination of dreams razed to the ground by the "fire."* It literally and figurately ended lives, relationships and livelihood. It signified a grave loss for both the Christian and the Muslim Joloanos young and old. Among the elderly the description has been visibly etched in their stories as they narrated details of how they survived the fire under different circumstances. Among the elderly, Jose described the town of Jolo after the incident as filled with charred bodies of man and animals lying on the ground. Jikirani an elderly Samal fisherman narrated of how the fire did not spare the boat he was renting and the little property he had. Ronald a middle-aged Christian participant remembered as a child his family's business folded up after their store in the market was consumed by the fire during the siege. His parents broke-up and tried their luck outside Jolo never to return. The prisoners were howling in pain while they were burning alive inside the municipal jail of Jolo right next to the UCCP where Sharon resided and where her father used to be the minister. This has continued to echo in her mind as a child and even now as an adult, Sharon also a Christian middle-aged war survivor confided. "The big fire" has been told and retold by the older generation and somehow found its way in the stories of the young adults. Nuraiza and Abdil, young Muslim co-authors may have not been direct witnesses to the tragedy but the sense of loss

has permeated their consciousness such that they often link their present troubles with the incidents of the past in their narratives. The grandparents of Abdil were trapped inside their eatery business (kaddai) which was also their dwelling place in the market when the fire broke. They used to be the ones supporting his family. Their death forced his parents to farm in the upland until their demise in a military shootout. Abdil sells cigarettes not lucky to have earned an education as a result of the incident. Nuraiza's relatives suffered more or less the same predicament and she would express sadness everytime the story is recounted to her. Unlike Abdil however Nuraiza's parents survived the war and had the means to send her to a private school where she finished her BSN. Allan, a young adult Christian has always wanted to be in the military. His father is a retired government soldier who was stationed in Jolo during the war. The "big fire" was definitely one of the details his father never missed telling him and this captured his imagination vividly. But not as much as the present conflicts that the younger generation he believed has inherited from their descendants.

### **C. The Military Atrocities and the "Salvage Fever"**

Also noted from the "fantasy themes" of the co-authors was the role of the military during the war and the on-going conflicts. An examination of the psycho-social trauma of the war survivors revealed common references made to the abuses of the government soldiers at the height of the mutiny in the 1970s. This was an era of military rule when Ferdinand Marcos flaunted his dictatorial



prerogatives. The siege in 1974 saw many forms of human injustices that highlighted the allegedly notorious involvement of the military in Sulu.

The older group vividly spoke of warrantless search and arrests, torture chambers, salvage orders (liquidation) during the upheaval and even prior to it. The series of violent acts allegedly directed by the Christian military towards the Muslims in general harbored resentment among the latter extending the same to the Christian public. These situations were repeatedly mentioned in the narratives of the co-authors especially among Muslims.

Jose, a Christian elder for instance even admitted to have isolated his family from the Muslims during the time when Muslim suspects were arrested never to be seen again for fear of getting into trouble. “Masul di na pag-ka-kitaan in mga Muslim suspects pick-upon sin sundalo, piya-salvage na kunoh sambat pa sin mga naka-ingat sin secret military mission” (In most cases Muslim suspects picked-up by the military were never seen again, They were “salvaged” (liquidated) according to those who know of this secret military mission), Jose disclosed. From the elder Muslims Jikirani accordingly were held for interrogation several times after having been suspected of exterminating a priest. Hamba likewise was held for interrogation for allegedly giving assistance to the rebels which resulted to his dismissal from office. Babu Arag did not attempt to hide her contempt of the government and the Christian military for believing that they deceived and deprived her of her land.

The middle-aged group by virtue of being “Marcos’ babies” who witnessed the longest term of the latter’s presidency in the Philippines generally

expressed their sentiments against Marcos and the military. The majority was convinced of Marcos' connection with the terroristic acts believed to be undertaken by the military with orders from him. Peter talked of "Marcos divide and rule" tactic believing that Marcos was driven by his political ambitions to perpetuate himself in power and to control Mindanao. The scheme he believed was actualized with the full support of the military. Thus, "senseless killings were instigated by the government soldiers to wipe out the Muslim rebels in the south during the mutiny," Peter claimed. In the process a number of innocent civilians suffered as casualties both Muslims and Christians since bullets did not choose whom to hit Peter added. From the middle-aged Muslims, Alona recalled of the Jabidah massacre in which several Muslim trainees were made sacrificial lambs in Marcos' bid for Sabah and power.

From the young adults, the involvement of the military is seen on a new angle that nevertheless speaks of abuse of power and impunity in undertaking questionable missions. Eric, a young Christian is an active Red Cross volunteer who witnessed some cases of military shootouts where innocent upland folks (tao gimba) became salvage victims.

#### **D. The Magic Eight**

Mentioned repeatedly from the narratives of the war survivors are the notorious "Magic Eight." The exploits of this group seemed to have become legendary among the Christian and Muslim Joloanos but in a sense that is far from complimentary. The eight members of the group used to be Marcos'

protégées who have gained wealth and power during Martial Law and consequently withdrew their membership from the MNLF at the height of the 1974 mutiny. This explains why some co-authors think it was part of Marcos' strategy to lure the Muslim rebels to defeat them. Some members of the Magic Eight still call the shots in Sulu and have continuously occupied important government offices, owned lands and private businesses. From the narratives of the co-authors is a strong implication that this economic set up involving the Magic Eight has presently affected the local folks in terms of livelihood. Unable to compete with the big fish small scale business owners added themselves to the numbers of the unemployed.

Everybody in town knows they show no mercy even when they are confronted by their own people. They act as if they own the place for they can have their wars anywhere in town, anytime. From among the key informants despair filled the stories of poor Joloanos especially those who reside in barangay Havena and Asturias for these are the favorite battleground of the warring clans whose families are oftentimes members of the Magic Eight.

The young participants surprisingly are familiar with these characters as they related their notions of the continued monopoly by these people of the local industry. This would allegedly include illegal businesses like smuggling of contraband goods and gun running giving legal barter traders a stiff competition, some co-authors revealed.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### DATA CONSTRUCTION

*If we take a closer look at the 'invisible walls, we know it is a myth. Yet it seems real because it is our creation. We can dismantle the invisible walls and build a new philosophy of Muslim-Christian relationship.*

Nagasura T. Madale, Ph.d.

#### I. Differences and Commonalities

##### *A “Tug-of-War” Between Divergent and Convergent Realities*

From the fantasy narratives of the Christian and Muslim co-authors, an *elaboration* of their *parallel perceptions* have surfaced *differences* and *commonalities* in their realities of war. As two unique peoples they have accumulated distinct notions of war through the years. These concepts have undergone institutionalization and transmission according to realities dictated by their respective cultures. The study somehow sees parallel transitions in their perceptions not only across culture but across age. And this parallelism is strongly manifested especially among the younger generation.

Majority of the elderly war survivors have manifested more divergence than parallelism in their perceptions. Except for two war survivors who can be considered *acculturated* by virtue of their marriage to the other culture the rest have stories laden with cultural prejudices of “the other” which shows that somehow, *old prejudices die hard*. From the Christians, Romeo and Jose have generally characterized most Muslims as *naïve* and easily *misled*. They have admitted to have become suspicious of the Muslims especially at the height of the upheaval. Although in the past, Jose who was

born in Jolo used to have a friendly association with the Muslims. From the Muslim elders, Babu Arag and Jikirani on the other hand have shown contempt of the Christians in their separate experiences where they claimed to have been oppressed. The two elderly Muslims have blatantly expressed their lack of trust of the “Christian Bisaya” and confessed to have maintained their distance from them. The rigid shifts in the attitude of the elderly were evidently triggered by the siege and its attendant circumstances. The attitude of Petrona (Christian) and Hamba (Muslim) who are both married to a Muslim and a Christian respectively however exhibits sympathy towards “the other” culture.

The middle-aged co-authors have displayed more *convergent* perceptions in their narratives. In their own versions of the war they have identified people and events they believe played significant part in the destruction of Sulu. *Putting the blames where they belong* was what majority of the middle-aged co-authors have done in their narratives. Peter, Ronald and Sharon from the Christian group have directly accused Ferdinand Marcos for having master-minded the mutiny. From the Muslim key participants, Alona and Hadja Fatima have likewise stressed on the role of the government and the military in oppressing the Muslims during the upheaval. While Muksan focused on the role of a Muslim leader in waging a battle. A poor leader he claims is responsible for the defeat of his followers. Their *portrayal* of the roles of “*the other*” culture has demonstrated willingness to accommodate the other. They have also shown more flexibility in their appraisal of the other culture than the older generation.

The young-adult co-authors were the most optimistic and forward-looking of the war survivors. Differences in creed and belief system have apparently played little

part in their perceptions of the war. They instead projected their own notions based on their existing realities. Their stories do not only dwell on concepts and definitions of war. They talk of solutions to problems and the need for community involvement. In effect, they demonstrated attempts to confront their present realities of war. Their fantasy themes describing the role(s) of “the other” culture generally evoked a sense of openness and adaptability more than the older co-authors. And for this, the Christian and Muslim young war survivors exhibited the most convergent and parallel attitude among the co-authors. The revolution in 1974 and the on-going conflict for them signify a battle for power wherein both Muslims and Christians are key actors. They believe that bothways the Christian and Muslim leaders can either destroy or build the community.

## **II. Constructing the War Realities from Two Perspectives**

The varied perceptions of the Joloano war survivors as earlier discussed are presented below in a parallel form. Across age and culture some contrasting opinions of the two cultures of “each other” suggested tendency towards stereotypes and biases particularly among the elders.

Table 15. A Parallel View of the Joloano War Survivors' Perceptions of "The War"

<b>Chrisitan Joloano War Survivors</b>	<b>Muslim Joloano War Survivors</b>
The 1974 mutiny in Jolo was unnecessary	The siege in 1974 was inevitable
It was a display of misguided beliefs among some of the Muslim fighters	A revolution was necessary for the Muslims to participate in chartering their future.
It was a desperate move for the Muslims to be heard by the government.	It was a fight to allow the Muslims to seek redress for their grievances.
It was a manifestation of Marcos' divide and rule policy.	It showed the abusive powers of the government.
It was a blunder Marcos committed and a cross the present generation carries.	It was a mutiny of the poor against atrocities of the military.
It was a mistake carried over from the past.	It demonstrated the ability of a Muslim leader to wage a battle
It triggered the on-going conflicts and struggle for supremacy between the government and Muslim rebels in Sulu.	It led to the abuses of some opportunists Christians and Muslims alike presently in monopoly of the community's economy.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

*In an atmosphere of animosity dialogue means powerlessness and vulnerability. From a position of weakness one can truly communicate his trust in the others. Trust is real when there looms the possibility of betrayals.*

Bishop Tudtud, Marawi City

#### I. A Glimpse of “The War” from Two Cultural Lenses

The Christian and Muslim Joloano war survivors were the two dominant cultures who have come together to *deconstruct* their realities of war through a series of individual disclosures that have elicited parallel constructions by virtue of some commonalities that characterized their perceptions. There were transitions (polarity and convergence) in their notions of war across culture and age. Nevertheless in the final analysis what surfaced in the study was their common goal to transcend their present dilemma. They were able to *reconstruct* their multiple realities (a correlation of their subjective and objective realities) in a manner that was facilitative and emancipatory for both.

Communication therefore played a crucial role in the study by facilitating convergent meanings of war between two divergent peoples in a war-torn community. It generated “fantasy themes” (narratives) that surfaced elements of convergence and divergence among the Christian and Muslim Joloanos. From these narratives motives and values behind the conflicting notions of “the war was inevitable” vs the “the war was unnecessary” pointed to varying social, political and economic circumstances under which war survivors were situated. And their inclination towards “pag-suwarah”



(dialogue) demonstrated a belief among most of them that a peaceful co-existence is not improbable.

## II. The Subjective Realities

*(The War as We Know)*

The Joloano war survivors' perceptions of war have been immensely shaped by their **subjective realities** (psycho-social trauma of the war and attitude towards "the other" culture) brought about by their personal encounters of the upheaval and other conflicts in the community. The study has observed transitions in their subjective-internal realities across culture and age. Other variables such as inter-marriage, education, economic status and length of stay likewise seemed to have affected differences in their perceptions. The findings have confined its discussions on the problems presented thus briefly touching on the aforementioned variables.

*Old prejudices* have characterized most of the narratives of the elderly war survivors. From the *Christian co-authors*, fear and suspicion of the Muslims were very strong except for one participant who is married to a Muslim. Two out three elders think that many Muslim fighters joined the 1974 siege because they were *naïve* and easily *misled*. All the elderly Christians are retired from the government service. Two were born and raised in Jolo. On the other hand the *Muslim elders* were likewise convinced that the "*Christian Bisaya* are *deceitful* and are *conspirators* of the abuses of the military. Except for a Muslim lawyer who holds a constructive image of the Christians by reason of his marriage to one, the rest of the elderly co-authors do not necessarily share his opinion. The two other Muslim participants did not have the

opportunity to attend formal schooling and are earning as a market vendor and a fisherman respectively. It should be noted however that the rigid shifts in their general perceptions were evident before and after the war.

They have *put the blames where they belong* from their stories of the war. Prudence generally characterized the perceptions of the middle-aged with their attempts at rationalization. Their fears are not as strong as the elderly neither are their suspicions of “the other” culture as heavy. Following the principles of causation, they have looked into possible explanations to the circumstances that led to the destruction of Jolo. From their respective accounts they have commonly demonstrated the following: fear of any kind of commotion or violence; fear of being caught in the crossfire between the military and the Muslim rebels; and the apprehension of getting involved between feuding clans. The Christians however have expressed their alarm of becoming victims of kidnapping and extortion more than their Muslim counterparts. Two of the Christian middle-aged co-authors are college degree holders and employed in the government while the third has finished high school and is self-employed. From their Muslim counterparts, one is employed in the government, the second is a barter trader and the third is a district supervisor.

The youngest war survivors have displayed audacity and resilience in their interpretation of the 1974 mutiny and the present conflicts. The study has seen their inclination towards convergence in *confronting their present dilemma* except for two participants whose despair and apathy have surfaced from their accounts. One Christian participant has expressed desperation from the series of gory incidents encountered involving the beheading of Christian kidnapped victims. A Muslim participant has

shown indifference towards the present warring in the place believing that in Jolo getting caught in acrossfire is a natural occurrence especially among the poor. The rest of the co-authors have expressed contempt of any kind of violence, graft and corruption. The majority have likewise believed in the community's active involvement in the peace process.

### **III. A Correlation of the Subjective and the Objective Realities**

*(The War as We Know vs The War as Told)*

The realities of war among the Joloanos are multidimensional. From the narratives of the co-authors, the study reveals that their perspectives are certainly a by-product of “the self” (subjective realities), a consideration of the war survivors' personal encounter of the event that gives distinct color and meaning to it. And “the social” (objective realities), the political, cultural and socio-economic circumstances created over time through institutionalization. A correlation of the Joloanos' subjective experiences with their objective realities (*institutionalized issues and beliefs of war*) yielded interesting results. Despite divergence in the war survivors' subjective realities they have shown convergence on the following issues of war – media war issues and the “other concepts of war.”

On media war issues, the Joloano war survivors have expressed their parallel views that: **“the lines of communication are dead between the general public and the war survivors of Sulu.”** The general belief that the newspapers, the television and the radio function as *crystallizers of war issues* to enlighten its audience is *a myth* among the Joloanos. From majority of the Christian co-authors regardless of age, the

mass media is considered popular as forms of entertainment rather than makers of news. They have raised the concepts that the news reports are manila-centered and are found wanting on issues that are newsworthy and relevant to audiences in conflict communities. Furthermore the tendency of the media towards *stereotyping* with “*the Muslim-villain and Christian-victim syndrome*” to sell news has accordingly provoked unnecessary frictions not only in the area but throughout the country. A number of Muslim co-authors stressed on the unpopularity of the newspapers for economic reasons and low literacy level especially among the folks from the upland (tao gimba). The issues of unreliability and insufficiency of the news on important issues like the TRIPOLI-ARMM, the Peace talks and war rehabilitation programs were furthermore stressed. The contents of news reports on war-related issues therefore have generally not served to elevate the social awareness of the people in conflict areas. The news agents themselves have not provided the vehicles much needed by the war victims to connect with the outside communities and raised their concerns to the government agencies concerned.

On the “**other concepts of war,**” the co-authors have generally shown disagreement on three issues: of absolute control by the Muslims; attempts to dominate by the Christians and the impossibility of peaceful co-existence between Muslims and Christians. They have argued that although “**the 1974 war has implied a struggle for power on the sides of the Christians and the Muslims the need to reconcile is great among them.**” On the first issue, there were arguments that the Muslims were co-opted by the powers-that-be to initiate a mutiny; that the fight was vengeance for the injustices they suffered and that they were naïve to understand the implication of the

siege. On the second issue, the Christians they say can never attempt to dominate since they only constitute less than 5% of the total population in Sulu; that the contempt of the natives of the Christian military have extended to the Christian community thus the misconception that they want to dominate; that this false belief has pushed undesirable elements to capitalize on the concept of religious war making the Christians target of kidnap and extortion. Finally on the third issue, the war survivors consensually maintained that a harmonious relationship is possible considering their fruitful past.

Finally, it is in the co-authors' reactions on the **culture-bound war issues** where discrepancies have strongly surfaced. Their concept of whether *to fight or not to fight in the name of one's religion* for instance generated divergent views owing to the fact that between the two cultures distinct traditions are observed. In addition, the concept of *jihad* (religious war) is practiced among the Muslims while among the Christians it is not. The disparities nevertheless have not precluded the co-authors in expressing their preference for a peaceful mode of resolving the crisis that continue to beleaguer the community through *dialogues* or "*pag-suwarah*." The traditional concept of **conciliation** has further suggested differences in *settling disputes* among the Muslims and Christians which they believe have affected the on-going peace process. And the *controversial question* that has surfaced from the discussions with the Christian and Muslim co-authors is: "**Are we a part of the Mindanao conciliation process?**" The co-authors have consensually called for *sincere efforts* on the part of the negotiators (GRP-MNLF/MILF) to consider the local tradition and the sentiments of the people in conflict communities for more responsive resolutions of the on-going *Mindanao peace process*.

#### **IV. Elements of Divergence and Convergence in Fantasy Themes**

The stories of the co-authors have generally generated *symbolic convergence* among them and demonstrated by common references made to people, events and situations. Being basically unique as cultures nonetheless their interpretation of the war was characterized by some elements of divergence mainly due to local tradition and the changing social circumstances.

##### **A. What We See Differently**

###### **1. The War was Inevitable vs. the War was Unnecessary**

The Muslims have generally manifested a belief that waging a war among them is an option. This attitude has strongly surfaced from the narratives of the elderly. Underlying this concept is the idea of *jihad* which for some Muslims is loosely associated with a collective will of the people to fight oppression. Stories of land grabbing and wanton acts of the military in taking the lives of innocent “tao gimba” from the upland have motivated some Muslims to join the siege in 1974 in redress of their grievances. It was unthinkable for the Christian co-authors on the other hand to associate war with anything religious. The elderly have asserted that nowhere in the Catholic faith is war taken as an option against religious persecution. Majority of them were convinced that the war in 1974 was unnecessary and could have been avoided.

The insights of two religious leaders have provided explanations to the prevailing attitudes in the community. Father Roy believes that diversity in the cultural beliefs of the Muslims and the Christians was not the primary reason for the misunderstandings. Their pleasant relationship prior to the mutiny was evident of mutual respect they accorded each other in the past. He narrates how they co-existed harmoniously to build improvements in Jolo and enhanced the uniqueness of each other's culture by being supportive of one another. Political ambitions and power play in the community he claims is largely responsible for the distorted concepts of *jihad* among the people. Hope is not lost Father says especially among the youth. The openness and optimism of the younger generation have shown resilience in their willingness to *dialogue* with the Christians and to engage in *pag-suwarah* among the Muslims. Ustadz Sali, a Grand Mufti speaks in behalf of the Muslims of the wisdom of a true *jihad*. As a respected religious leader he believes that the sentiments of the people are his concern. While "jihad" according to him is allowed under some circumstances the war that was fought in 1974 was not one. This however does not mean that the people cannot wage a battle to protect their individual or political rights. He claims many Muslims were victims of injustices in the past and even at present oppression continues. He however believed in a peaceful revolution where Muslims practice "avoidance" of conflict. To preach the Islamic teachings

through a peaceful manner is what he considers the greatest jihad. Such divergence in the perceptions therefore is to a large extent dictated by the co-survivors adherence to their respective religion, tradition and societal norms.

## **2. Fear of Military Abuses vs. Fear of Violent Acts from the Rebels**

A common element from the narratives of the Muslim co-authors is their fear of military atrocities. One way or another, their sufferings during the siege and thereafter were attributed to the activities of the government and the military. The psycho-social trauma developed especially among the elders has been connected with their fear of being dispossessed of their land; fear of being evicted from their homes and losing one's livelihood. And the animosity that they harbor against the Christian community is mostly linked to the Christian military. In effect, there are some Muslims who have continued to maintain their distance from the Christians even at present because they are associated with the presence of the soldiers in the area.

The Christian co-authors on the other hand have expressed paranoia of the Muslims in general. Again, this attitude is strongly demonstrated among the elderly. The co-authors opted to isolate themselves for fear of being associated with the activities of the Maoists (MNLF) at the height of the upheaval. The elderly Christians have



admitted to have suffered from sleeplessness, fear of fire and bullets and anxiety of staying out late. And much recently kidnapping and extortion activities compounded their fears. They have confessed that this attitude of suspicion has worsened after the siege and is currently felt by a number of the Christians in the community even now.

The elements of hostility and suspicion were strongly manifested from the narratives of the co-authors and have surfaced from the stories of the key actors and leaders in the community. Bapa Hajirul's contempt of the soldiers was mirrored from his personal encounters with them. The death of his two sons he claims was not justified. While the "contagious atmosphere of oppression" was described by Seargent Sarmiento's from his account of Jolo as "Little Vitenam." He narrated how the military acted like "killing machines" and how the Muslim rebels themselves wrought havoc in Sulu in 1974 with the use of land mines, high-powered ammunitions and explosives.

### **3. Where We Meet as War Survivors**

*Powerful Christians and Muslims were Equally Responsible  
for the Wars*

A gradual transition in the realities of co-authors has surfaced from the middle-aged group where elements of convergence were evident. This point of convergence was even more pronounced from the narratives of the young adults. From the standpoint of the middle-aged

Christians the key actors who have played vital part in the siege come from both camps- the Muslims and the Christians. In the same manner, the middle-aged Muslims have identified causes of Sulu's devastation as direct witnesses who like their Christian counterparts were present in the 1974 siege. The middle-aged war survivors were tagged as "Marcos' babies" since they were born and have spent most of their lives during Ferdinand Marcos' longest term as president of the Philippines. This circumstance is crucial in explaining most of their convergent views about Marcos' role in the 1974 conflict.

The middle-aged co-authors were convinced that Marcos has master-minded the tragedy. "It was Marcos who instigated the mutiny and made it appear like a religious conflict between the Muslims and Christians with his *divide and rule policy*," claims one of a Christian participant. It was a blunder Marcos committed and the present generation carries the cross, continues another Christian. From the Muslim co-authors one participant talks of the coercive forces of Marcos and his military in the *Jabidah Massacre* in 1968 which she believes triggered the misconceptions of the 1974 uprising as an ethno-religious conflict. Another Muslim participant recalls of her ceaseless flight in the upland to evade Christian military harassments. Along this context some powerful Christians were seen as having committed the atrocities of the war. On the other end some Muslims were believed to be equally guilty of having oppressed their own people. The *Magic Eight* or the ex-rebels

who used to be Marcos' protégées were often mentioned from the narratives of the middle-aged and the young adult war survivors. The Christian co-authors see them as ambitious people who have amassed wealth to further their political career. The Muslim co-authors consider the *Magic Eight* and some noted MNLF primemovers as renegades who turned their back on their responsibility to protect their own people.

The narratives of Bapa Hajirul and Sergeant Sarmiento have likewise mentioned the roles played by some powerful Christian and Muslim personalities in the destruction of Sulu reinforcing the notions raised by the co-authors in the study.

#### *A Vision of Peace and the Emerging Concept of Dialogue or "Pag-suwarah"*

The concept of dialogue or *pag-suwarah* has generally emerged from the narratives of the co-authors especially from the most outspoken and the youngest groups. Majority of the Christian and Muslim young adult participants have shown a proclivity towards confronting their realities head-on. They may not be witnesses to the 1974 conflict yet their stories have clearly linked their present circumstances with their notions of war in the past. They described how their realities are compounded by conflicts involving *political rivalry* and *material greed* for power among some Joloanos today. Both the Christian and Muslim young co-authors talk of the continued warring for supremacy between

the government military and the Muslim rebels in their bid for control. One Christian young adult describes the penchant for guns, goons and gold among some wealthy Muslim politicians. Another participant relates of how some Muslim leaders have monopolized businesses in town taking advantage of their position and depriving the poor of their meager sustenance. The escalating banditry like kidnapping and extortion activities are believed to be in some way connected with the existing power play between the military and the rebels. From the narratives of the Muslim young adults the presence of the *Magic Eight* and the feuding of clans among their people are also evident. Among the Muslim young participants furthermore is a belief that at present, it is the Muslims who should decide between *war and conciliation* not to allow others to run their lives.

On top of these revelations is their mutual preference for *pag-suwarah* with the different sectors in the community suggesting their willingness to accommodate one another. Parallel constructions have strongly defined the perceptions of the young war survivors. This observation has been confirmed in the narratives of Father Roy as he shared his *vision of peace* from his narratives of the war. He is convinced that the Joloanos especially the younger generation has the gift of openness and optimism in confronting their existing dilemma “This is not to forget the past history of friendship between the Christian and Muslim Joloanos of Sulu which can be the basis for improving

present relations,” he added. On the same note Usadz Sali talked of a “true jihad” which means a peaceful struggle to avoid conflict at all cost and to resolve problems through constant *dialogue* with oneself and others. In a way, he acknowledged the wisdom of non-violent means of settling disputes which he considered to be a virtue among Muslims.

## CHAPTER NINE

### IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

*Our ways of talking can move people to action or change their perceptions. Like collective poets, we can open up new 'spaces' new possibilities for being human...but only if necessary conditions are in place for a truly dialogic space to exist, for everyone to participate in the interplay of voices...*

John Shotter

#### I. Implications

1. Through “Magison-ison” a participatory mode of discourse, the study has actively engaged the Christian and Muslim Joloanos of Sulu in “deconstructing” and “reconstructing” their notions of war. Their perceptions were mostly characterized by a *tug-of-war* of beliefs among them. In effect, the research was able to establish a *parallel reality construction* between the two unique cultures as proposed in the study framework. Their retrospection and introspection have shown that regardless of distinct faith and varied circumstances a bond held them together as *war survivors*. Some psycho-social trauma and perceptions of one culture may be far removed from “the other” but their recognition and acceptance of such divergence were evident in their narratives. Their reactions to some institutionalized beliefs of war were more *convergent* than divergent in the sense that they responded on the said issues based on their common experiences. Two dominant cultures therefore- the Christian and the Muslim Joloanos of Sulu may be culturally unlike but are considered one people by virtue of their being survivors of the 1974 tragedy in Sulu.

2. Recollections of their psycho-social trauma and perceptions of “the other” culture as survivors in the war have enriched their respective realities. Their stories brought forth pleasant and unpleasant memories. Negative images of “the other” culture suggested that prejudices and stereotypes are just hidden somewhere. Christian terms that referred to the Muslims like: *misguided* Muslims, *naïve*, *fools*, “*juramentado*,” *war-freak*, among others have surfaced from their narratives. Among the Muslim terms of the Christians were: *Christian Bisaya*, *deceitful*, and *unworthy of trust*. This enabled the Christian and Muslim Joloanos to appreciate the essence of their experiences while strengthening the bond created between them during the process of reconstruction.
3. A revelation of the Christian and Muslim Joloanos shared objective realities of war suggested that they subscribe to similar set of general beliefs that determine to some extent their present mind set particularly on media war issues and other war-related issues.
4. An identification of their distinct culture-bound realities of war implied that Christian and Muslim Joloanos are at the same time bound by realities determined by their respective culture. They have likewise exhibited familiarity with the tradition of “the other” culture. They may not necessarily practice such norms yet their co-existence made them appreciative or in some cases tolerant of the reality of the other.
5. A correlation of the Christian and Muslim Joloanos’ subjective and objective realities of war revealed that they have more similar than dissimilar reactions to

the general beliefs of war. It therefore suggests that the two cultures' parallel realities are more convergent than divergent.

6. The Christian and Muslim Joloanos' common reactions towards media war issues' inadequacy in terms of relevance of content and its role as crystallizer manifested how their subjective realities negated the general belief to the contrary.
7. The Christian and Muslim Joloanos' common reactions to the other concept of war (there was desire for control on the part of Christians and Muslims during the mutiny but the need to reconcile is there...) also implied how their subjective realities have opposed the general belief to the contrary.
8. The Christian and Muslim Joloanos' diverse reactions to culture-bound realities (religious war and conciliation) suggested that certain war beliefs are shaped by traditions unique to their particular culture. Despite diversity each culture exhibited familiarity with the concept of "the other" by citing examples witnessed in the community. Examples are the concepts of "jihad" and "pag-sulot" among the Muslims.
9. Differences in perceptions across age can largely be attributed to the changing socio-cultural, political, and economic circumstances the war survivors have been continuously exposed to. Variance in opinions implied unique context situating the elderly, the middle-aged and the young adult participants. Hence in explaining the war and the past relations between the two cultures, the older participants were able to reminisce and make comparisons in the process surfacing long-time biases; the middle-aged relied on specific information of the



1970s thus putting much of the blame on Marcos “the dictator”; while the young participants mostly based their judgements on their present realities.

## **II. Recommendations**

1. *The study recommends further research on the reality construction between Christians and Muslims in conflict communities.* This will provide more opportunity for our people and the communities outside Mindanao to appreciate how the two cultures have continued to thrive amidst conflict. Further studies are recommended to look into the possibility of combining a qualitative and quantitative approach in examining vital issues on *inter-personal communication*. As suggested by a noted Maranao writer from Cagayan Xavier University, Nagasura Madale, Ph. D. there are limited literature that dealt with *inter-cultural marriages* between Muslims and Christians. In a paper entitled: *An Inter-Ethnic marriage of a Maranao and an Ilocano*, Madale attempted to illustrate his own marriage by discussing the challenges involved in a marital union of two unique cultures. The findings in these studies would provide the public with real-life accounts of constructive relationships between Christians and Muslims amidst the notions of conflict.
2. *Magison-ison as a methodology has been dynamic in eliciting responses from the grassroots. Hence a replication of the process can be made in studies where active participation of community members is imperative especially in anthropological and social researches.* The methodology would be more effective however where extensive time is allotted for the researcher (facilitator)

to immerse in a study involving two or more cultures. The participants should be given more leeway in constructing and revising their own *research problem* as suggested by Alfonso (2001) in her “poietic construction” so as to make it more responsive to evolving social perceptions. It was not entirely accomplished in the study due to time and material constraints.

3. *The study recommends the participation of multi-sectors in breaking down invisible walls between the Christian and Muslim Joloano war survivors.* Since the 1974 war and the on-going conflicts in Sulu go beyond a mere political struggle the *call* should come from both the Christian and Muslim Joloanos who are the real victims of the continuing crisis.
4. *Media penetration in all social and economic level in conflict communities like Sulu would bridge the information gap that is fast widening between the Joloanos in the province and the outside communities.* Contents of news reports by the media should try to balance between constructive and hard facts about the war in Sulu and other conflict areas. Furthermore the establishment of local-based news centers in the province in partnership with local government units or non-government organizations should be encouraged. It is crucial at this point in time when *war* seem to be the by-word in the domestic and global scenes that news reports should be disseminated to inform and not to *disinform* to avoid escalation of wrong beliefs. Joloanos especially Muslim folks from the upland are very sensitive as to how stories are told in the news and so they would prefer to get the war stories from people they *trust* by *word-of-mouth*. At all cost and in the name of ethics reporting should avoid *stereotypes* which can generate

ethnic biases, religious conflicts or moral indignation among the reading public. In a situation where the marginalized and the powerless should be protected, the media should choose *public service* over commercialization. The tri-media should play a crucial task in bringing together under one nation peoples whose mindset seemed to be fragmented by bodies of water, region and creed instead of constructing invisible walls that would inflame useless battles.

5. *Getting the Joloanos especially the tao gimba (upland folks) to participate in peace advocacy should also be the concern of NGOs and POs in the community.* The religious groups and socio-civic organizations are effective advocates for peace since they are not beholden to any political institutions at least in theory. If there are those which are linked to some public offices at least a number have demonstrated dedication in their service to the public. The NGOs and POs in conflict communities in Mindanao have certainly left a mark of progress among the people. In Sulu their presence are felt with the Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI) of the Notre Dame of Jolo College taking the lead. The Jihad-al-Akhbar foundation is another non-political group influential among the youth in community service. The Silsilah Peace and Dialogue Movement is another example of an NGO that has engaged different sectors in town in the rally for peace. *Barangay Busbus* in Jolo used to be a recipient of a foreign NGO-GO multi-million peace project for the *tri-people* in Mindanao. The “*radio for peace*” stations started out as an ideal program but folded up due to lack of technically-skilled people in the area, insufficient monitoring, inadequate capability building training and the “*penchant of the local residents for*

*dedicating songs instead of advocating for peace*” according to one implementor. These problems should be considered prior to program implementation and should not discourage other NGOs in pursuing similar goals. What is needed at present is *more public involvement in the missionary objectives* of the Non-Government Organizations. Among some *Muslims* in Sulu however there is *little participation* in the affairs of peace advocacy due to lack of information and proper motivation. The study sees the urgency of massive information campaign by the NGOs and POs especially among the upland folks to encourage their active participation in the *suwarah* the local version of a dialogue designed to generate occasions for consultations between the Christian and Muslim Joloanos.

6. *The feeling of isolation by the Jolaonos can be overcome by actual and sincere involvement of the national government in resolving crucial problems in the community involving poverty, homelessness, unemployment and displacement of upland folks.* The involvement of the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) in the affairs of the peoples in Mindanao war communities is fundamental. There is a strong indication coming from the war survivors of Sulu as revealed from the study, the imperceptible shared belief that “*what goes on in conflict areas are problems that should be confined there.*” Thus, majority of the war victims Christian and Muslim Joloanos alike feel *isolated* from the rest of the country. The conflicts in Mindanao should be taken seriously not only as a local but national concern that involves all Filipinos. The attitude of most Joloanos especially the elderly Muslims that has surfaced from the study is

*uncertainty* and *distrust* of the government and the unusual manner of associating the Christian community in its activities. The remote attitude that most people from the southern part of the country have towards the central government is somehow manifested from the findings in the study. As suggested earlier, there should be immediate and honest efforts on the part of the government to dismantle the *invisible barriers* that have widened the so-called “*social cleavage*” between peoples-particularly between the northern and southern Filipinos. There should be a straightforward *appraisal* of the *peace programs* implemented by the national government in the south. A truthful assessment of the developments of these projects should be done on a regular basis and standard procedures. For instance, there are no surveys or case studies conducted by the government to evaluate the strength of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). And the heartbreaking results of the study reveal that a number of people from Sulu, one of the provinces under its jurisdiction have shown disgruntlement on how things are going. Many are doubtful and ignorant of its nature and functions. In effect, the provisions of the TRIPOLI may have been followed in paper but not in essence. The implementation of *war rehabilitation programs* is another sensitive issue that is not given sufficient attention. The study reveals that majority of the war survivors have in actuality not been made beneficiaries of these programs instead many of those who benefited are businessmen who have access to project implementors. It clearly signified irregularity in the distribution of livelihood and loan programs for war victims which until now is not being

rectified. Finally, the peace negotiators (GRP-MNLF/MILF) of the on-going Mindanao peace talks should be *decisive* in their stance. Instead of perpetually putting-off the peace talks there should be a clear definition of the *subject* and the *objectives* of the negotiation. Time element is crucial. The urgency of the state of affairs requires quick resolutions to meet the exigencies in war-torn communities. It is important for the negotiators to continuously consult with the people in order to come up with decisions responsive to their problems in conflict areas. The *local tradition* of *conciliation* should likewise be considered and programs that would alleviate *poverty* and *ignorance* against which the people from conflict communities are presently at war with. These are clearly manifested from the findings in the study. There should be a candid appraisal of livelihood programs by the central government as a form of control to ensure that they are properly implemented in spirit and that the results are favorable.

7. *Dialogues and “pag-suwarah” among the Christian and Muslim Joloano war survivors of Sulu should be encouraged.* The emancipatory concept of “*Magison-ison*” (participatory discourse) and the “*co-authoring*” of realities between the two cultures (the Muslims and the Christians) should continue at all levels. When applied in the study the findings have strongly shown the proclivity of the Joloanos to engage in a *dialogue* or *pag-suwarah* particularly among the younger generation. The community members themselves should therefore create more opportunities for this occasion at an inter-personal level: at home, in the office, in the market place, in the kaddai or coffee shops, in the church or at the mosques. The proliferation of the positive concepts of “*peace*

*and conciliation”* on the sides of the Muslims and the Christians will certainly have a *rippling effect*. A sense of heightened awareness among the people in the community would *allay suspicions* and *negative perceptions* towards one another that usually block developments because of false impressions. In time, the Joloanos can achieve the much-awaited harmony in their community after a gracious acceptance of the fact that their can only be lasting peace when there is *unity in diversity*.

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# **APPENDICES**

Personal Information Sheet

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_ Sex \_\_\_\_\_

Birthplace \_\_\_\_\_ Length of stay in Jolo \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation \_\_\_\_\_ Educational attainment \_\_\_\_\_

Marital status \_\_\_\_\_ Religion of spouse \_\_\_\_\_

Average monthly income \_\_\_\_\_

Other source of income:

Check the items in the list that you own:

Ownership: radio \_\_\_\_\_ TV \_\_\_\_\_ VHS/DVD \_\_\_\_\_ others specify \_\_\_\_\_

Check type of media subscription:

TV \_\_\_\_\_ newspapers \_\_\_\_\_ radio \_\_\_\_\_ VHS/DVD \_\_\_\_\_ others specify \_\_\_\_\_

Are there issues/stories of the Mindanao war that you read?

How are the stories written? Why?

Do you subscribe to the issues/stories? Why

How do you propose the issues/stories should be handled in reporting?

### Focus Interview Schedule

(Christian and Muslim participants)

1. Narrate your experience of the 1974 war in Jolo and the circumstances prior to and after the siege. [*“Ipag ison-ison in wakto way pa nag-bu-bunoh, sin pag-bunoh iban sin na-ubos na in bunoh ha Sug.”*]
2. Describe what emotions you have felt then and what emotions have lingered until now? Why? {*Uno in kiya-nanaman atawa in parasahasan mo sin wakto yadto naraa sampay bihaon?*}
3. What instances and who are the people who have remained memorable to you. Why? {*Uno in kiyaki-ta-an mo iban sin mga tao kiya-kilahan mo way na-iig ha pikilan mo wakto pag-bunoh? Mayta?*}
4. How would describe the Christian/Muslim Joloanos in Jolo prior to the siege and thereafter? What attitude do you have of them? Why? [*“Biya-di-in in pangatud mo sin mga Christians ha Sug wakto way in bunoh iban sin ubos na in pag-bunoh? Mayta?”*}]
5. How would describe Jolo as a community with peoples of mixed culture before the 1974 mutiny and thereafter? [*“Wakto way pa nag-bunoh iban puas na biya-di-in in panga-tud mo ha दौर Jolo iban sin mga tao nag-hu-hula dii? Mga tao lamugay na in agama iban pangaha-gari?”*]

**Focus Group Discussion Guide**  
(Christian and Muslim Key informants)

1. What do you often hear are told about the role of the media in reporting news of war in Mindanao? Mention as many as possible {*“Uno in masul karungugan mo pag-iyanon sin mga tao sin mahinang sin media ha hilo-wala dii ha Mindanao?”*}
  
2. What issues relevant to the war or conflict in Mindanao are reported in the newspapers, television, and the radio? Mention as many as possible. {*Uno in issues ha pag-buno yan ha report sin katas habal, television iban radio?*}
  
3. What stories do you hear of the possible reason(s) of the 1974 mutiny? Mention as many as possible. [*“Uno in masul karungugan mo ha pag-suysoy sin manunya sin pasalan sin pag-bunoh?”*]
  
4. What peculiar beliefs of war do you hear people talk about in the community? {*“Uno in panga-hagari sin kaibanan manunya ha pag-bunoh pag-karungugan mo?”*}
  
5. What peculiar beliefs of conciliation do people have in the locality? [*“Uno in panga-hagari sin mga tao dii ha “pag-sulot” sin pag-bunoh?”*]

**Focus Interview Schedule**  
(Other Key Actors)

1. How would you narrate your experience of the 1974 war in Jolo? [*“Ipag-ison-ison in kiya-kita-an iban kiya-na-naman mo sin wakto pag-bunoh 1974”.*]
2. From your standpoint as a soldier/rebel/priest/grand mufti what explanations can you give about what could have triggered the war? [*“Uno baha in pasalan sin pag-bunoh ha pikilan sin biya kaymo sundalo/rebel/pari/imam?”*]
3. Describe Jolo before the 1974 siege and after?(economy, political set-up, infrastructure) [*“Uno in pangatud mo sin दौर Jolo sin way pa nag-bunoh iban sin puas bunoh?”*]
4. Describe the relationship of the Chrisitan and Muslim Joloanos before the mutiny and thereafter. [*Biya-di-in in pg-agad sin mga Christian iban Muslim Joloanos dii ha दौर tagna iban biha-on?”*]
5. What beliefs and issues of the war in Jolo do you think are true and which are not. Why? [*“Uno-uno in mga suy-soy iban panga-hagari sin pag-bunoh ha Sug in bunnal Iban unoh in putting? Mayta?”*].

**Focus Group Discussion Guide**  
(Christian and Muslim Key Informants)

1. What are your reactions to the stories you hear about the role(s) of the media in the on-going Mindanao conflict? Do you agree? Why? *{Uno in hika-bayta mo sin mahinang kunoh sin media ha hilo-wala di ha Mindanao bunnal baha atawa bukon? Mayta? ”}*
2. How would you assess the media news reports on issues of Mindanao conflict? How much do you think is true? Why? *[“Uno in hika-bayta mo sin news reports sin media ha mga issues pasalan sin hilo di ha Mindanao? Bunnal baha atawa bukon? Mayta? ”}*
3. How would you react to stories of war from the community about the possible cause(s) of the mutiny as earlier identified by the group? *[“Uno in hika-bayta mo sin kabunnalan sin suysoy sin pasalan kunoh sin pag-boh? Nag-kahagad ba kaw? Mayta? ”}*
4. What reactions do you have regarding the belief(s) raised earlier that the 1974 war was reflective of the tradition of the Joloanos? *{“Uno in hika-bayta mo ha suysoy sin manusya in pag-bunoh kunoh nag-kugdan iban sin panga-hagari sin mga Joloanos? ”}*
5. What can you say about the community’s concept of conciliation (pag-sulot) in relation to the on-going Mindanao peace talks? *{“Uno in hika-bayta mo sin suysoy in “pag-sulot” di ha hula nag-kugdan kunoh iban sin Mindanao peace process? ”}*



## **Narratives of Co-Authors**

Christian co-authors

(The Elderly)

### ***The War was Unnecessary***

**Jose**

During my preliminary visitations to the homes of the co-authors, I would be entertained by one gentleman who plays the violin as well as flute with such grace and expertise. I would deliberately prolong my stay to get the privilege of listening to his music.

Jose with his solid built at 69 looks more like a retired general than a retired music instructor. He was born in Jolo and speaks the native tongue as fluently as any Taosug. His parents were among the pioneering settlers in Jolo in the 1920s. He would recall light moments when he met Carmelita his wife who was then a daughter of a well-respected Christian lawyer in town. *“Nagkita kami sin asawa ko, ha ‘barn dance’ College days namu ha Notre Dame of Jolo. Malingkat siya babae sa di mag pang-asip. Member na ako sin College band. Kiya-runugan niya man ako nag-panayam flute makapag tuning kami pag-ubos walo bulan...”* [My wife and I met in a ‘barn dance’ during our College days in Notre Dame of Jolo. She was ravishing but haughty. I was already a member of the College band then. When she heard me play the flute we became sweethearts after 8 months..] Courtship for 8 months Jose claims was already considered “very short” that time..

“Jolo before the 1974 war was a paradise” ,reminisced Jose. “We did not think of bomb explosions, kidnappings and other threats to our lives. No harm would come to us in the middle of the night...” he recounts. Even the American and the Japanese invasions were nothing compared to the 1974 war. “I would hear my parents relate their stories of war. Most of the fightings they say were confined to the mountains. It did not involve a lot of damage to the civilians, their property and livelihood. The Americans and the Japanese would face the ‘insolent’ Moros and their grievances in the upland. When the colonizers left, Sulu was able to recover..” Jose pointed out. For Jose even the earlier resistance of the Moros did not seem necessary for the natives materially benefited from the infrastructure and other developments undertaken by the Americans in the vicinity.

According to Jose the relationship between the Muslims and the Christian settlers in the past was relatively harmonious particularly after the American military administration and the liberation period. “We were treated with deference by my Muslim friends. I would even join some Jesuit priests to say mass in Patikul and Luuk municipalities in the 1950s. The church was already active then. There was nothing to fear recalls Jose. When Jose got married in the 1960s he would remember how every morning a Samal (Muslim boat dweller) would deliver fresh fish. “Muslim friends on their way to the ‘*gimba*’ (mountains) would pass by their house after having sold their farm products...would wave their hands and say... *lumabay pa kami* (we are passing through) as a polite gesture...” commented Jose. From his evening classes at the NDJC, Jose and his friends would visit the “night market” near the town plaza, a Spanish landmark at the center of Jolo where fresh seafoods are sold cheaply. At times they would stay until 11 in the evening inside the movie house viewing FPJ blockbuster and would only leave when the screen flashes “The End”.

In the early 1970s change in the attitude of some Muslims became noticeable claims Jose. Tension already filled the air. This was the time when they lessened their religious activities in public places. “Stones would be hurled at us during street processions and so we

confined our religious meetings inside the church...” Jose maintains. This hostility continued and climaxed during the 1974 war. For their part Jose admitted that prior to the war his family “isolated” themselves from the Muslims for fear of being suspected by the military. When Martial Law was declared the military began their warrantless search and arrest in earnest. “*Awun na karunugan namo Muslims kawa-on sin military suspek kunoh Maoist..*” [We hear stories of Muslim suspects getting arrested by the military not to be heard from again].

Jose believes they were lucky to have survived the 1974 war after having seen faces of death and all forms of violence. “There are times when I still find difficult sleeping at night anticipating the sound of machine gunfire like marbles being poured out of a big barrel...” Jose confides. The day Jolo was invaded by the Maoists on February 7, 1974 his family was warned not to leave their home by two rebel commanders in the wee hours of the morning, Jose relates. These rebels were his former students. However when the “**big fire**” broke on the second day, the family escaped to a safer place, to the Philippine Constabulary Camp like everyone else. “*In tao biya way na halga. Mata-ud patay way na piyag-put sibo-sibo Muslims iban Christians. ..*” [Life seemed to have no value then. A lot of people died and were left on the streets, Muslims and Christians alike...] Jose painfully recalls. The 1974 war accordingly changed a lot of things in Jolo. The place has not recovered since then and fear continued to lurk in the hearts of the people. “I would say, **it was a fight that was unnecessary**- a political joust for ‘territorial supremacy’ at the expense of the civilians between the Marcos administration and the Muslim rebels, commented Jose.

Jose and his family stayed on in Jolo after the war primarily for the reason that he was tied up to the place because of his job, “*yari in hinang ko di ako maka-iig...*” He admits that despite the fact that he seemed to have surpassed the worst in life “fear” still enfolds him. His grandchildren according to Jose surprised him for they have the guts to stay out late than him. “I would be home by five in the evening while my “apos” will be out with some friends until ten in the evening ... I would scold them and they would listen but only for a while...” All of

Jose's five children are married; employed in the government and residing in Jolo. *"Di kita masu-son bang suspicious na kita kanila. Asal in astul sin mga Maoists ha mga Christian military pu-as bunoh na-raah na sampay pa Christian civilians labi na biha-on. Katum-tuman ko pa in anak sin doctor di ha Jolo piyugutan uwoh sin mga kidnappers.. ..Marayaw pa in way na kita lima-lamud kanila..."* [We cannot be blamed for having become suspicious of them. It is apparent that the anger of the Maoists against the Christian military after the war has tremendously affected the Christian civilians especially nowadays. I still remember how the son of a doctor here in Jolo was beheaded by the kidnappers...It is preferable to keep our distance from them...], explains Jose.

"Today, stressed Jose, there is a different kind of war going on in the minds of the people in Sulu. There is a large number of displaced war victims mostly Muslims from the outskirt municipalities who lost their livelihood after the 1974 war- congesting the town of Jolo and resulting to all forms of civil disturbances. Now, it is not unusual to hear even ordinary folks being kidnapped for ransom, Jose explained. "My fear of staying out late after the 1974 war is compounded by these kidnapping incidents..."", he added.

## **Petrona**

### ***A Desperate Move to be Heard***

Petrona admits she did not fall for her husband instantly. She used to have terrible images of a “**juramentado**” because her mother used to threaten her as a child from the sabil-ilah (juramentado) to stop her from wailing...”*ipa-utod koh in uwoh mo ha sabil-ilah bang di kaw humundong!*”[I will have your head chopped-off by the sabil-ilah if you don’t stop crying!]

The threat apparently did not work for her because ...“it was my husband’s fierce looks and gallant ways that won my heart over to him...” , Petrona confided. At 72, Petrona a retired teacher, is still physically agile. Born in Jolo and married to a Muslim, she nevertheless retained her faith as a devout Roman Catholic. For the length of time that they were married, Petrona confessed she was never asked by her husband to embrace his faith. They argued a lot but the reasons for such squabbles never centered on religion. Petrona believes that the secret of their lasting relationship is the space and respect they allow each other. The couple is blessed with six children, all of whom have followed Petrona’s faith.

Petrona’s descendants were from central Luzon who migrated to Sulu province at the height of the land problem and the HUKBALAHAP insurgency. They were farmers who came to try their luck in agriculture of which proved to be profitable that time. For it was during this period that skilled and professional laborers from Luzon were encouraged by the Americans and later the Philippine government to migrate to Mindanao explained Petrona. The climate in Sulu then was favorable to them as settlers.

Abundance was what characterized the lives of her descendants according to Petrona. Even when the Japanese penetrated Jolo which was already clear in Petrona's memory, they continued to have supply of farm and agricultural products although on a limited scale. For a while farming and fishing were disrupted at the height of the Japanese invasion. "Katumtuman ko pa kami iban sin mga apo ma-as mo nagta-tapok ha mga foxholes supaya di kugdanan timbak plane sin mga Milikan iban Jipon..."[I remember how my family and your grandparents (the researcher's grandparents) would hide in foxholes to evade gunshots from American and Japanese war planes], describes Petrona. During the Japanese invasion Petrona used to occupy the same area in town as the researcher's Muslim relatives. When the entire Sulu province was liberated from colonial rule, Petrona thought the place did not suffer much. War damage aids and other pecuniary benefits poured in to reconstruct the ravages of the colonial war in Sulu.

During the New Republican Government, Petrona felt that the Muslim and Christian Joloanos were one in their commitment to rebuild the province. This promise eventually materialized because of the strong sense of unity. "In mga Muslims labi na wakto yadto asal marayaw tu-od in pag-tagad ha mga Christians. Nag-a-agad ha mga Christians ha pag-dayaw sin दौर. In kata-uran kanila yan nag-hihinang ha mga Christians bang bukon ha baay ha office..." **The Muslims that time had an amiable relation with the Christians. They had been closely working with the Christians for the improvement of the town. A few of them worked with the Christians either as household help or in the office...**]. This trusting relationship prevailed until the sad incident involving the massacre of Muslim military trainees in Corregidor Bataan- the Jabidah Massacre. The feeling of alienation from her Muslim relatives and friends was very strong then. The air of hostility was everywhere- in the

marketplace, along the streets, in the offices, in school.. “My husband would come home from Friday prayers in the mosque and would relate news of attacks by the Maoists... He would even advise me to refrain from joining religious activities in public for fear of riots.

The rumor of the ‘Maoists attack’ persisted for months. Until finally when least expected the siege took place on February 7. Petrona describes the incident as follows:

*“Upat adlaw way himundung in pag timbak. In taud sin patay ha daan. Pag sunog sin दौरा यदतो ना कामी नाग एवैक्यूएट हा फिलिपपाइन कन्स्टेबुलरी कैंप इबान सिन कता-ुरान मानुसया एवैक्यूएट्स,,”* [For almost four days open firing continued ceaselessly. Lifeless bodies covered the streets. When the *big fire* broke we were forced to evacuate to the Philippine Constabulary Camp with the rest of the evacuees..]. Petrona thought never to have expected so much sacrifice was possible on the part of the rebels.”*Kiyakita-an ko tu-od bang biya-di-in imatoh in mga Maoists. Nag-papanaw harap pa barracks sin military iban sin pag-daa sinapang nila. Biya sila sin nag-sabil nagka-matay rah sawab mat-ud in sundalo..*”[I saw how the Maoists (rebels) fought as they approached the barricade of soldiers carrying their rifles. They were waging a lost battle from the start, for they were outnumbered.]

In the eyes of Petrona, the 1974 war was a man-made catastrophe, **a desperate move on the part of the Muslims to be heard**. According to Petrona, *”misan pa hatiko tiyo-tiyo rah in Maoists umatoh rah tu-od. Bang man dah sila karunungan sin parenta..”*[I think, even if the Maoists (rebels) were outnumbered they will still fight if only to be heard by the government..]

Petrona believes that Muslims by nature do not accept defeat. Through the years of her association with them, she claims never to have known anyone openly admit his weakness. In her case for example Petrona confessed, *“tagna, kahunitan ako mag-pahati ha bana ko bukon mangii mag-pababa sin atay misan bukon dusa moh...”*[In the past she used to have a hard

time convincing her husband that it is alright to show humility even if one feels aggrieved..]. Her husband Petrona disclosed, firmly believes in the saying, "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.." After the tragic incident in 1974, Petrona revealed "mahang na ako mag papanaw sin duum. Lisag upat sin mahapon pag-ubos sin pag hindo ko yan na ako ha bay. Pag kubla-an na tu-od ako bang makarungog timbak atawa sunog.." [I seldom stay out late in the evening. After class, I come home usually at four in the afternoon... I easily panic whenever I hear gunshots and stories of fire..]

No social reconstruction efforts by the government were visibly undertaken in Jolo after the war and even at present. Everyone, disclosed Petrona went back to work amidst ruins and destruction. "*Pila bulan kami nag hindo ha guwa classrooms, ha sawuum kahatian iban bay-baay wawab nabubuslot punglo in mga dingding..*" [for months after the war, we would hold classes outside, under the trees; in makeshift tents because classrooms had bullet holes all over the walls..} In effect, Petrona observed the province of Sulu never had the chance to get back on the recovery track. Its decline continued even with the Tripoli Agreement and the ARMM. "*Mata-ud in na-ino-inoh bang unoh in karayawan sin Tripoli iban sin ARMM bang way rah napinda in da-ira. Gaam man kiya-sigpitan na in manusya...*" [Many Joloanos were wondering what developments were brought about by the Tripoli and the ARMM when almost everyone has become more problematic in terms of livelihood and shelter.

Presently, according to Petrona, crime rates have increased. "*Tima-ud na in nangidnap. Nahinang na pag-usaha sin kata-uran ha gimba. Din a ma-ambat in kaba-ta-an way naka-pag-school nag-addict na sadja sawab way sin i-pangadji..*" [Kidnap for ransom has become an industry for people in the mountains without source of earning...drug abuse has become prevalent among the youths who do not have the means to get a decent education...] Today,



Petrona believes that the Joloanos are waging an even more dangerous war that is neither religious nor ethnic.. *“In bunoh sin mga manusya ha Sug bukon pasalan agama atawa ethnic. In bunoh biha-on sin mga Joloanos pasalan sin kasigpit iban kamiskinan nila...”* [ the Joloanos are presently waging a silent battle against stagnation and poverty.

## Appendix B3

### Romeo

#### *A Display of Misguided Beliefs*

Romeo arrived in Jolo in 1957 to work with the Department of Public Works and Highways as a construction worker then rose from the ladder because of hard work.

Born in Orami, Bataan in 1937 and having suffered the Japanese invasion in their place he decided to embark on an adventure and finally ended up in Sulu. He started out as a construction worker with the DPWH and was receiving fifty pesos a week. Because he thought he wanted more he enrolled in the Notre Dame of Jolo College (NDJC) and finished a degree in Engineering as a working student.

*“Tagna ha Jolo, tahun 1950s tiyo-tiyo da in interesado maka-ubos College ha mga Muslims. Hangkara-yii rah in sin. Booming na in Jolo ha barter and trading iban sin Sabah Malaysia. Mata-ud in mga Muslims nagkara-yahan ha smuggling sawab bukon dah tu-od masigpit in sarah sin parenta..”*[In the 1950s only a few Muslims were interested to have a College degree. Money was easy then because of the booming barter and trading between Sulu and Sabah Malaysia. Many Muslims made big money through smuggling because the law was not very strict then..] Hence, livelihood among Muslims flourished in trading and majority opted to be engaged in this mode of business. According to Romeo, this was one of the reasons why during those days most

of those who occupy high positions in the government of Sulu were Christians despite of the fact that majority of the Joloanos were Muslims. Not many were qualified in the government service education- wise.

Romeo maintains that all these years he prefers to be civil in dealing with Muslims knowing how volatile they can get. *“Mata-ud bagay ko Muslim businessmen dayahan sah di ako lumamud business kanila malapay kita sin kalo nila...”* [I have lots of Muslim friends who are rich businessmen but I don’t do business with them knowing it would be dangerous to get involve in their conflicts]. On the other hand, Romeo admits his wife Erlinda thinks otherwise, *“Way kaw naka-hati sin adat Taosug..”* [you don’t really understand the culture of a Taosug, Erlinda would say. The wife whom Romeo met during his college days was also a product of the Notre Dame Dominican College, was born and raised in Jolo.

The war in 1974 did not come as a surprise for Romeo. Accordingly, he knew it would erupt after having observed the rise of militant Muslim groups and the presence of religious scholars whom he heard came from the Middle East countries like Iraq and Lebanon in the 1970s. *“Pag-karungugan ko na in mga manusya mag-suysoy sin pag-jihad, sawab in ka musliman kunoh piyag patay na hi Marcos. Sambat pa nila in Jabidah genocide sin mga Muslims...”* [I hear stories from the Muslim folks about a call for ‘jihad’ after what Marcos allegedly did in the Jabidah massacre, killing Muslims sent on a secret mission. They believed it was an act of genocide against Muslims...]

What followed according to Romeo were tension filled days wherein most Muslims especially the women were mandated to veil their faces, dawn their head turbans ‘*turong*’ and the rest were refrained from joining the Christians regardless of the occasions. The church processions in the streets he used to join with his wife lessened and eventually stopped. It became unbearable according to Romeo when Muslims folks would yell curses at them and turn violent whenever they hold church programs in public. The social relations between Muslims and Christians were never as bad as that of the 70s.

Romeo surmised, the Muslims during this time were ‘poisoned’. Because of the ‘bandwagon mentality’, they were easily misled. ‘In kata-uran sin mga Muslims sin wakto yadto hangka-rayii rah na raah sin mga ison-ison, na-latson in pikilan sawab sin ‘bandwagon mentality’ miya-magad katan ha pag bunoh misan way pang-hati bang unoh in pasalan..’[Majority of the Muslims during those times were easily duped into believing what they were told. Their minds were poisoned because of the bandwagon mentality. Many joined the siege without knowing exactly what for...]. In effect, Romeo thought, the 1974 war was mainly ‘**a display of the Muslims’ misguided beliefs**’. During that bloody encounter between soldiers and the Maoists in 1974, Romeo describes how he lamented for the death of innocent civilians who were not even given decent burial especially the old and the handicapped who by choice stayed behind to meet their fate. Included in his prayers were the women and the children whom he accordingly witnessed to have fought and died for the ‘wrong’ cause. “kiya-kita-an ko tu-od bang biya-di-in imatoh in mga bata iban babae. Maka-ulong sawab duga-ing in pang-hati nila sin pasalan sin pag-bunoh. Sa-boh pag-pagoy namoh sin pag-sunog, awun naka-tabang kamoh fifteen-year old subol. Di na kunoh siya maka-balik pa tiangge sawab kakila-han na sa siya sin mga sundalo. Way siya naka-pikil sin *limaggo in pag-bunoh. In agi nila pa-iigon kami ha Bangsa namoh.. ha Bangsa Moro..*”[ I saw how the women and children fought. It was pathetic, for they had a different notion of what they were fighting for. While we were fleeing from the ‘big fire’ a fifteen year old boy who aided my family confided that he was fearful to come back to town since he was already identified as a rebel by the soldiers and that he never anticipated the fight to escalate ... They were convinced that the Muslims were being driven away from their homeland- the Bangsa Moro..]

That was several years ago and yet the feeling of dread still engulfs him every now and then. It is also anger, according to Romeo that consumes him each time he hears stories of conflict and violence in Mindanao. “I still cannot understand why we have to degrade ourselves by ending other people’s lives for a very material cause- greed for power...”, disclosed Romeo. The bad memory lingered and is partly the reason why he had very high walls constructed around his house. “Of course”, reasoned Romeo, “these walls would not save me from the destruction of another war. But at least I will be momentarily safe from whatever troubles outside..” . Romeo furthermore clarified, “ I would not hesitate to leave Jolo if I have a choice.. I have retired and my retirement pay has gone to the construction of my house.It would be up to my children to make their move.”, came his straightforward answer when asked about his plans of staying in Jolo.

As far as Romeo is concerned the war in 1974 was by far the worst tragedy that befell Jolo. The changes that followed he believes are fatal results of that fateful incident. “We are now suffering the consequences of the war. Many of the disgruntled members of the Maoists or the MNLF have become “lost commandos” and are the ones creating havoc in the community. They used to be farmers or fishermen displaced during the war and have nowhere to go..” Romeo is not very optimistic about the ARMM. “Just like what Ruben Canoy was saying, the ARMM, according to Romeo, “is just a paper autonomy”. The Tripoli Agreement furthermore may have symbolized an agreement between the rebels and the government, but Romeo observes “there is apparently lack of trust on both sides”, hence the chance of conciliation he believes is remote. “The problem now”, claims Romeo, “is that, the Muslims are vague about what exactly they want for autonomy despite the Tripoli and they have not apparently delivered what is expected from them judging from the present state of things. The government on the other hand seemed to have just anticipated this failure..” Romeo concluded.

(The Middle-Aged)

Appendix B4

## **Peter**

### ***Marcos’ Divide and Rule Policy***

Peter’s parents are both Christians who came to Jolo from Leyte in 1960. The family was lucky to have immediately found jobs in the government after having met a tragic loss brought about by a typhoon that struck Leyte in 1959. They were grateful the circumstances

conjoined with their decision to stay in Jolo for good. His mother was hired as public school teacher while his father got himself employed with the Provincial Treasurer's office.

At 39, Peter has high ambitions of completing a Master's degree in Public Administration and has remained single. Jokingly he confessed, "*bukon marayaw mag-asawa bata pa dii ha Sug. Maka-ulong in aswawa bang mabalu, nagbubuno sadja di katoh..*".[ It is not good to marry young here in Jolo. Your wife will be saddled with problems as a widow. It is a pity because we are always at war here]. However, Peter wistfully added."*nagtatapok ako sin pag-ungsod kalo-kalo mag-baya kako in malingkat dayang dayang piya-maya-maya-an koh..*"[I am saving for my dowry just in case the beautiful Muslim maiden I am courting would accept me for her husband..] He claims to have long considered becoming a "*balik Islam*" (Muslim convert) years back as a personal commitment.

The war in 1974 was already sharp in the memory of Peter. He admits that at nine years old the sequence of events was kind of muddled but there were segments in his story of the war that were painfully clear. "*Pangannal ko matay na kami. Yan kami ha lawum Notre Dame chapel. Biya kami sin siyu-sunog ha narka. Way koh na kiya-ingatn bang biyah-di-in kami naka-pagoy. Nag-agad kami hi father Hagad iban sin du-waa sisters. Na-raa kami sin mga Maoists (rebels) ha Tanjong tuo adlaw...In mga Maoists in nag dihil pag-kaon kamoh. In hipag-tugna namoh bugas tubig ha dagat... Pag-balik namoh ha Jolo nasunog na katan, In bannus sin patay ha raan. Simakit in uwoh koh ha baho sin halo barran.*"[I thought we were about to die. We were trapped inside the Notre Dame chapel while looking for a hiding place. I felt like we were burning in hell. We were with father Hagad and two sisters when we were brought by the Maoists to Tanjong beach to hide for three days..The Maoists supplied us with food. We were using sea water to cook rice. Jolo was razed to the ground when we came back.

Carcass of people and animals filled the streets. My head reeled because of the decomposing smell of death..]

For Peter, the war did not imply any religious or cultural dimension. “*Sibo-sibo kitah victims, kiya-sakitan sin pag-bunoh Muslims iban Christians..*”[*The Muslims were victims and suffered as much as the Christians..*] Peter narrated how civilian Muslims and Christians would run for cover crossing the streets amidst strapping bullets, massive air raids and naval bombardment. Just like what is seen in the movies, the town of Jolo describes Peter, was covered with land mines and divided into war zones between the military and the Maoists. The only neutral ground was the Philippine Constabulary compound. The whole scenario, commented Peter was ridiculously morbid.

However, before the siege Peter already detected a gradual change his parents’ attitude towards the Muslims in general. One example was when he was refrained to join his Muslim friends in school and prohibited to come freely with Bapa Hassan. Hassan used to drive him to school in his pedicab. “*Naka-ingat ako sin pasalan Maoist kunoh hi Bapa Hassan liya-lawag sin military..*”[Later, I was told Bapa Hassan was suspected sympathizer of the Maoists}. Eventually, Bapa was arrested by the military and a few days later his body was found mutilated in the bushes a couple of meters outside the town proper, confided Peter. Bapa was a cheerful old fellow who never missed bringing him to the “*kaddai*” (muslim eatery) for his favorite “*satti*”(special chicken or beef curry) on their way home, recalls Peter.

For Peter, the 1974 upheaval has in actuality brought the Muslims and Christians together. His parents accordingly may have reservations towards his Muslim friends yet he kept his friendship with them. In fact he wanted at first to pursue a college degree in the Philippine Muslim College of Jolo (PMC) but his parents were adamant about him finishing at

the Notre Dame of Jolo (NDJC). Nevertheless he continued socializing with his Muslims colleagues and was grateful that the NDJC was consistent with its educational and missionary pursuits among people of varied beliefs.

It was according to Peter **the policy of Marcos to divide and rule** just like in the colonial past. Following the example of the Americans, Marcos capitalized on the cultural divide between the Muslims and the Christians the former instigated. This psychological divisiveness aggravated during the *Jabidah Massacre* claims Peter. It alarmed the Muslim community “*ummah*” and gave rise to the Muslim militancy that led to the formation of the MNLF (Maoists) and the consequent armed resistance in 1974. Since part of Marcos’ strategy was to divide, he enticed the MNLF rebel leaders to his side. The group was the notorious “magic eight” of Sulu, who have presently remained in power and have allegedly continued terrorizing the people for material gain.

At present, Peter thinks the same story is repeating itself. Only this time Peter emphasized there is not only one man but individuals and groups who are keeping the violent memories of the past mistakes very much alive. “*In naka-ngii katoh pasaran sadja natoh in mga tao mapanday ma-raah kita ha pag-bunoh.*”[The problem now is that we allow ambitious people to declare war for us} For example, Peter pointed out, the arrest and imprisonment of ARMM ex-governor Nur Misuari slaughtered a number of civilians in Jolo and parts of Zamboanga in a bloody collision between the government troops and the Misuari sympathizers. In effect the Tripoli and the ARMM becomes a “big joke”, thought Peter, unless those entrusted to run the autonomous region for “self-determination” are not doing so for “self-enrichment”. When the Abu Sayaf group (ASG) came into the picture, the concept of war even became more complicated. There were rumors that the military were “in cahoots” with

the ASG for the “money” which explains why the bandits were never captured..”, declares Peter.

“The bottom line is,” according to Peter **“the war can go on endlessly like a vicious cycle with both the Muslims and the Christians being used as scapegoats by unscrupulous people who ironically would not want the war to end...”**

Appendix B5

## **Sharon**

### ***Dwelling on Past Mistakes***

A Boholano by birth, Sharon nevertheless spent her childhood days in Jolo and is presently married to a Cebuano. She attended the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP) Jolo preparatory school established in the 1960s where her father used to be the church minister.

*“Ha wakto pag-school preparatory tiyu-tiyo rah in pupils ha UCCP. In kata-uran bukon Muslims. Ampa tima-ud in Muslims pag-open elementary level ha early 70s. Pu-as bunoh 1974 ha Jolo mata-ud in way naka-balik pag-school ha UCCP...”* [During my time as a pupil of the UCCP preparatory school few Muslims were enrolled. The number of Muslims enrollees increased in the early 70s. Many did not come back to enroll at the UCCP after the 1974 siege in Jolo] Sharon believes that the failure of most Muslims to return schooling with the UCCP was primarily due to the 1974 havoc and the perceived war between the Muslims and Christians then.



Sharon claims that the UCCP as a pastoral entity and an educational institution caters to both the Muslims and the Christians in the community. In terms of literacy program it has reached out to a number of Joloanos despite of the fact that it is relatively new compared to the Jesuits and the Recollects whose missionary works in Mindanao started as early as the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The Jesuits for example, according to Sharon first established its base in Zamboanga then Dapitan, reaching Jolo in the 18<sup>th</sup> century along with the Spanish military forces thus, the construction of the fort, the lighthouse and the walled town of Jolo (Intramuros). Sharon's extensive knowledge of the Catholic missionary works in Sulu was due to her father's interest.

Sharon has this to say about the Muslims in Jolo: *"Bukon biya sin masul karu-ngugan nato ha kaibanan in mga Muslims bukon hilo wala. Pag suy-soyan ako hi ama pasalan experiences niya iban sin mga tao higad (Samals and Badjaos) ha Bangas island. Managat sila pila adlaw way pag-compass bulan sadja in ki-kita. Mata-ud in kiya-hati-han hi ama panagat kanila. In dayaw pangatayan sin mga tao higad kakita-an bang biya-di-in sila kumatawa sadja misan kiya-sisig-pitan..Kakila-han in mga Tao higad ha panagat iban pag-pangalay*" [Muslims are gentle folks. I used to hear my father narrate his exploits with his Samal friends (Tao higad) of Bangas island (a small island near Jolo). They would go fishing for days without compass relying only on the phases of the moon. He learned a lot about fishing from the Samals. Their graciousness is manifested from how they take life with simple acceptance. They are usually noted for two things, diving and dancing the 'pangalay']. The Samals' livelihood centered on selling 'sea foods'. For a while 'pearl culture' was an enterprising business especially with foreign buyers from Manila who took advantage of the cheaply sold commodity by the unsuspecting Samals, Sharon commented.

The 1974 war that followed rendered the Samals devastated in terms of livelihood. Like the Tao gimba (Muslims from the upland) farming became a dead enterprise after the war. Social displacement resulted from the 1974 uprising for which the government has never provided a successful solution, Sharon observes. *“Maka-buga in nahinang sin pag-bunoh 1974. Kiya-lawan pag-usaha in mga manusya di ha Sug. Nag-u-uma iban mana-nagat sibosibo rah. Way na mag-uma sawab sin buga ha sundalo ha gimba. In nag-karayahan pu-asbuno in ex-rebels. Siyu-ud na in business pag-panagat. Way mahinang sin mga tao higid..”*[the consequences of the 1974 were alarming. Many lost their livelihood, farmers and fishermen alike. The farmers refused to go back to their farms in the upland for fear of the soldiers. The ex-rebels were the ones who gained from the spoils of the war as they presently monopolized big fishing business in the area and in the process deprived the Samals of their income...].

Sharon painfully recounted her memories of the war. *“Yan ako sin pag-bunoh. Ma-sukok in Municipal Jail sin Jolo ha UCCP. Kiya-kita-an ko tu-od bang biya-di-in nasunog in piliso ha lawum jail, way naka-pagoy. Way na hatiko maka-labi pa sin ngii nahinang sin pag-bunoh..Malugay nalawa ha pikilan ko in sakit sin taghoy sin mga nasunog...”*[I was there during the destruction of Jolo in 1974. The Municipal Jail was right beside the UCCP compound. Its structure was razed to the ground including the hapless prisoners trapped inside. I imagine the war couldn't get more horrendous than what I have witnessed. The prisoners were howling in pain and burning alive. It took some time before I stopped hearing those voices in my head...]. Presently, confessed Sharon she would easily get agitated by any kind of commotion and violence.

For Sharon, **the 1974 war was a “mistake” carried over from the past.** The Muslims in the past believes Sharon, were filled with a sense of injustice for being divested of powers

from their homeland by foreign invaders. The colonial rulers Sharon maintains may have brought economic developments in Sulu but in its wake, they created a **psychological divide** (gap) among the Muslims and Christians. She is convinced that this situation was what the Marcos administration used to instigate the conflict in 1974. Thus, It has been doubly shameful for the Muslims to feel betrayed by Marcos after the Jabidah Massacre. There were also atrocities committed against them by some government soldiers and their own people who were lured to power during the martial law regime. These mistakes seemed to have been compounded by more serious concerns that Jolo and the entire province of Sulu are now facing, Sharon comments. The problem, emphasized Sharon is no longer a micro but a macro concern for which the government should not continue to ignore and to provide with “**band aid solutions**”. Sharon concludes.

Appendix B6

## **Ronald**

### ***One Man's Blunder other People's Cross***

*“Revolutionary baby in hipag-tawag namoh ha taimanghud ko babae sawab piyag-anak siya sin pag-bunoh, February 7, 1974..”*[Revolutionary baby is what we call my younger sister for she was born during the war, February 7, 1974...], disclosed Ronald.

Aside from the fact that Ronald's younger sister was born during the war, the destruction of Jolo was sharply etched in Ronald's memory for it symbolizes the culmination of some important things in his life. *“Nagbutas hi ama iban ina pu-as bunoh. Way naka-piin ha pag-usaha namoh. Timulak hi ina pa Saudi wakto Gulf war 1980's. Hi ama limawag hinang ha Cebu. Way na sila naka balik sibo-sibo. Nag-asawa mag-balik hi ama, hi ina way na*

*nakasulat. Limaggo kami lima mag-taimanghud ha apo namoh*” [My parents separated after the war. Nothing was left of our business. My mother tried her luck in Saudi during the Gulf war in the 1980’s while my father went to look for a job in Cebu. That was the last time we saw them both. Father remarried while mother failed to write at all. All five of us grew up with my Muslim maternal grandparents..].

Ronald 40, is a mestizo whose mother is a Taosug while his father is a Cebuano. The tragedy of a broken home after the war, was one reason why he married late. Just recently married to a Christian lady from Mizamis Oriental, Ronald vowed to keep his marriage intact. Second in a brood of five, Ronald grew up in a community populated by a mixture of Muslims and Christians. His maternal grandparents tried to revive their business of selling dried goods after his parents left. Two of the siblings including Ronald finished College while the rest of them were not lucky to even have completed elementary. Shortly before his grandparents died, their lands from the gimba (upland) in the municipality of Patikul where they used to plant cassava or “panggi” (Muslims staple food) and coconut became idle and were eventually claimed to be a part of the adjacent property owned by a notorious ex-rebel. The ex-rebel was a member of the “Magic Eight”. They were feared warriors who sided with Marcos at the height of the 1974 uprising. Ronald’s family lost the income generated from the “copra” one of the many repercussions of the war. Land grabbing incidents, Ronald disclosed has taken its toll after the war. “*Masukod in Magic Eight, piyag-bahagi-an nila in alta sin mga tao ha pag-buno...*”[The Magic Eight were fortunate to have divided the property of the people as spoils of the war among themselves...], revealed Ronald. Indeed one way or the other hard-earned property of most Joloanos slipped from their hands as a consequence of the war.

During the actual siege while many lost their fortune overnight others became instantly rich. Those who took advantage of the chaos ravaged the town with impunity becoming

wealthy in the process. *“Bukon na sala in mangawa pag-ka-on atawa tamungun ha bodega sin lannang dayahan...Mata-ud in natakaw ha pag-papadjakan...”*[It was not wrong anymore to take food and clothing from the bodega of rich Chinese businessmen. A lot were looted from the pawnshops..] The concept of war that stuck to Ronald’s mind focused on the gruesome taking of lives, limb and property at the expense of the defenseless. Ronald narrates sadly how worst things have happened to people in a crisis like the 1974 war while they simply look on. “Everything can be taken from a person without mercy and anticipation. He only has to accept the bitter reality. There were no options...” Ronald maintains.

Both the Muslims and the Christians suffered the atrocities committed during the 1974 war, Ronald comments. The Joloanos, he believes became “the butt of a joke” of one man whose political ambitions blinded him no end. Ronald was convinced that Marcos was responsible for this blunder. **“The present generation carries the cross caused by the indiscretion of one man at the height of his invincible powers..”**, Ronald explains. *“Asal kiya-i-ingatan namoh way pa in 1974 war, biyu-bunoh sin mga sundalo in kata-uran Muslim manusya ha gimba misan bukon Maoists. In military operation nila order kunoh daying ha Malacanang. Masull in ma-timbak nag-u-uma sin lupa nila. Hangkan da mata-ud in di mabaya magbalik pa gimba...”*[We knew even before the 1974 uprising that the military were terrorizing helpless Muslim farmers tilling their lands who were not necessarily Maoists. The military operations they say were orders from Malacanang. The farmers never returned to the mountains fearing for their lives...], Ronald reveals. In other cases, some soldiers would allegedly harvest the fruit trees of the Tao gimba (Muslim folks from the upland) by order from their superiors for their consumption. Ronald’s relatives were victims of such abuse, he claims.

When the war broke in February 1974, it was as if they were “in suspended animation” discloses Ronald. For almost a week, the Joloanos’ life cycle was far from normal. They were constantly in search for safety amidst non-stop aerial and naval bombardment. “In effect the lives and property lost were considered collateral damages of the war”, Ronald explains. “It was so quiet when we came back to our grandparents’ home near the market after the ‘big fire’.

Everyone was in a state of shock. Clothes were left hanging in the clothesline of the very few houses spared by the fire. Ronald recalls the stealing and looting that happened just before the fire. “*Mata-ud in natakaw ha pawnshops sin mga military. Way kabuga-an awun dah sinapang nila. Pu-as bunoh mata-ud in way mi-niig ha Jolo nag-usaha na sadja iyosal in alta nakawa nila...*”[A number of military men looted the pawnshops without fear because they had firearms. Many stayed on in Jolo and started business from the property stolen...]

Ronald thinks that Marcos used the military to instigate unrest and forged instability in Jolo to inure himself in power. This blunder, Ronald remarks has never been rectified to this day. “*In sakit sin pangatayan namoh daying ha pag-bunoh di hika-sipat..in nalawa kamo di hika-sipat...*”[The heartache the war has caused us was immeasurable..The loss was tremendous..], laments Ronald. The situation in Jolo has become more volatile even with the establishment of the ARMM, Ronald observes. “War clouds continue to loom in the horizon. With the recent killings involving innocent civilians in the skirmishes of feuding clans due to political rivalry, we do not know what to expect anymore...”, Ronald adds.

can be taken from a person without mercy and anticipation. He only has to accept the bitter reality. There were no options...” Ronald maintains.

(The Young Adults)

**Eric**

***Who's At Fault Now?***

*Way na naubos in Pag-bunoh di ha Jolo. Kahit ngayon marami ang gusto maging leader...[It has been a never ending battle for power here in Jolo even now. Many would like to become the leader...],* describes Eric.

Eric's paternal grandparents came from Zamboanga and settled in Jolo in 1930 after which his father was born. His mother on the other hand is from Pangasinan whom his father met in one of his journeys, agreed to marry Eric's father and reside in Jolo. Being the youngest in a brood of four, his version of the 1974 war and Jolo's colonial past was merely a collage of stories retold by his elders. He nevertheless has a picture of what motive lies behind all these fightings- "greed for power".

Born in 1984, despite his youthfulness, Eric has a mature outlook in life. "Eversince I can remember, Jolo has been described by the media and the non-Joloanos as a danger zone", claims Eric. "Off limits daw ito sa mga tourists at kahit sa mga kapwa Filipinos from the metropolitan cities sa bansa.."[off limits they say to tourists and even to Filipinos from the metropolitan cities in the country], he adds. He may not have experienced the war in full scale like the 1974 siege, but his personal encounters of violence and killings accordingly qualifies him as a war victim. He believes that the present condition in Jolo has links to the past. "*Unoh in nag-happen tagna in pasalan bang unoh kita biha-on...maka-ulong kita sawab way rah tu-od nahinang natos improvement ha da-ira*"[What we are now in Jolo is because of what

happened in the past...We have become pathetic and stagnant..We have not really given our best to improve Jolo..], explains Eric.

“Pathetic, because the colonial wars of the past might have taught a number of Muslims the virtue of fighting yet ironically it resulted to violence and senseless killings nowadays. When in the past it was imperative for the Muslims to fight the foreign invaders to protect their homeland..”, articulates Eric, now the fightings have caused untold damages to the place and the people. The 1974 uprising to Eric’s mind has manifested this situation. “Stagnant, for the apparent reason that the chaos of continued warring led to social displacement, livelihood and property dispossession of the Joloanos”, Eric continues. The town proper of Jolo, Eric believes is presently congested with an idle population. And this to a large extent has contributed to the rising crime rates. According to Eric, it is not uncommon today to see vagrants (mostly Muslim youths) selling “shabu” in broad daylight. The police force would readily turn a blind eye on such transactions.

“The war is on-going”, Eric maintains. “And not only the people of Jolo but the entire country should have every reason to be alarmed because nobody seems to be accountable for the damages and casualties inflicted upon innocent civilians nowadays...”, he declares. In the case of the military, there were operations launched by them against unknown subjects and the ones who suffer are mostly civilians. On the other hand, the kidnap for ransom incidents are vehemently denied by the MNLF (Moro National Liberation Front) or the MILF(Moro Islamic Liberation Front) and blamed on the ASG (Abu Sayaf Group) whose very existence is being questioned by the public as they are allegedly linked to the military... ”*mata-ud in mainoh-inoh mayta masul in magkamatay military operations ordinary civilians way misan connection ha rebels.*”/Many have wondered why in many instances those who were killed in military



operations were ordinary civilians who had no connections whatsoever with the rebels..], Eric reveals. The MNLF and the MILF he believes furthermore have their own axe to grind for having been branded by the media as “kidnappers”. Eric thinks there is a strong probability that the MNLF and the MILF could be engaged in kidnapping to get the full attention of the government, but the Abu Sayaf Group (ASG) performs their banditry stunts “purely for the money”. And they are not necessarily one and the same group- the MNLF, MILF and the ASG, clarifies Eric. The Muslims cannot be lumped together under one category he believes. “Ha mga manusya Muslims asal awon in na-si-silaw ha alta awon da isab in way nag-ba-baya kasañang ha baran nila...” **[There are Muslims who are beholden to power but there are also others who never displayed greed..]**, clarifies Eric.

For over five years now, Eric has been actively involved in the Philippine Red Cross (PRC) community programs as a volunteer. He has been inspired by the missionary services provided by the Notre Dame of Jolo College (NDJC) where he is currently finishing a degree in Commerce. He relates how on several occasions he risked his own life to save civilians wounded in an open fire between the military and the rebels. At fifteen he was already trained to provide medical services to war victims mostly in the gimba (upland) where military operations are being actualized. That was how he learned about some cases of innocent Muslim farmers being subjected to military abuses. “Timbakun muna kaw sin kaibanan abusado military ampa mag-asubo...”[some abusive military would shoot first before asking...]

The recent shooting incident he was involved as Philippine Red Cross volunteer was when Jolo was again agitated following the arrest of the ARMM ex-governor Nur Misuari. “For almost two days Jolo was under siege by sympathizers who attempted to overthrow the Philippine Marines. In the process several civilians were injured by helicopter firings”,

recounted Eric. “Kami mga Red Cross Volunteers dimaragan dumuhil medical assistance ha mga kiyapali-an pag hundong sin open firing. Sah way pag-warning tumimbak na isab sila mag-balik in sundalo iban mga rebels... talagang delikado ang buhay ng mga volunteers...pero kailangan ng serbisyo namin..”[We, the Red Cross volunteers would run to provide medical assistance to the wounded each time the firing stops. But the shootings would resume between the government soldiers and the rebels without warnings exposing us to danger. Our missionary work is truly dangerous but our services are needed..]

Eric’s toughness has been honed through time and exposure to critical situations. *“Limago ako di ha Sug sin nagbu-buno sadja. Ha lugay sin wakto nasaksihan ko in pag buno way na buga ha lawum atay ko...lu-oy na sadja...bang man ako maka-tabang dah..”*[I grew up in an atmosphere in Sulu where conflict is a natural occurrence. Because of the length of time that I am exposed to fightings, fear has no more place in my heart... only compassion and the desire to help...].

Eric’s co-volunteers are mostly Muslim youths who share the same viewpoint as his. A number of community leaders who should be working on the social reconstruction of Jolo, on the other hand according to Eric, has different priorities despite the sad socio-economic state in the area. “Kita-a sadja in kamiskinan sin mga manusya pasalan ha pag-buno. Hi siyo in nag-paragan sin kata-uran business di ha da-ira Jolo bang bukon dayahan nakura rah! Hambu-ok nakurah in tag-dapu sin telecommunication system, gasoline stations, water purifier, coca-cola distributor pa...Uno in nata-bang nila ha mga miskin? Asal kasanang nila in pipikil sadja...” [Just by looking around you will see how poor the people have become as a consequence of ceaseless warring. And you’ll find that many of those who run most businesses in town are rich leaders. For example, one government official owns the telecommunication system, gasoline stations,

water purifier and holds a permit as a Coca-cola distributor. They have not done much to alleviate the plight of their constituents...thinking only of their convenience...], Eric discloses.

After all is said and done Eric tries to articulate this disturbing dilemma,” **Who’s at fault now?”**. He thinks it is unfair for the younger generation to be placed in a hateful situation of senseless killings but then he asks, ”are we given a choice?”. *“Asal way ma-pinda dii ha Suug bang di kita ma-involve ha pag-solve problems di katoh...Way mahinang bang mag-complain sadja kita iban lumawag tao naka-sala. In local government iban in military dahun natoh mag-ison-ison labi na in taimanghud Muslims natoh. Subay sila iban kita nag-a-agad ha pag-implement parakala ikarayaw sin manusia. For example subay ma-implement in pag-ta-as penalty sin mga extortionists iban sin mga kidnappers. In manusia makatabang ha pag-report sin possible suspects...iigon natoh in buga ha atay natoh...Kita katan Muslims iban Christians in nag-baya kalinaw iban kasañang ha दौरa”* [Nothing constructive can happen to Sulu unless we get involve in finding solutions to our own problems here in Sulu. There is nothing we can get out of negative criticisms and fault-finding. It is imperative that we consult with the local government, the military especially our Muslims counterparts. We should be partners in proposing relevant local ordinances. Higher penalty against the extortionists and the kidnappers should be implemented. The community for its part can help in alerting the military of the possible suspects. **We have to erase fear in our hearts. Because the bottomline is all Joloanos Muslims and Christians would want peace and economic security to prevail..]**,maintains Eric.

Eric is convinced that continued fightings have not only rendered the people poor materially but a thousand times poorer spiritually. And to his mind, *“in mga Joloanos biha-on way na na-iig ha kamiskinan sawab piyasaran sadja kita sin mga nakurah. Mata-ud in mabaya*

*mag-nakurah sah ha lawum atay in kasanang nila in pipikil bukon in pag-tabang ha manusya. Mati-tigil lang ang giyera dito kung ang mga nakurah di mahilo mag-pikil sin alta na sadja..”*

[...the Joloanos today have become stagnant because our leaders allowed us to be so...Many have aspired to lead but their hearts are filled with greed and not service to the people. Thus, the only way for us to end these ceaseless battles is for the leaders to correct their faulty ways of being obsessed with material power...], Eric argues.

Appendix B8

## **Marie Jane**

### ***Heads Would Roll...***

*“Kiyakita-an nila in karot nahihipo dugo, biyu-butang ha basurahan masu-ok ha Caltex gasoline station Hadji Buto street. Piyo-putos in iyo-turan uwoh sin kidnapped victim, anak usog sin Christian doctor. Way kunoh naka-rihil ransom...”* [They saw the bloody sack on a pile of garbage near the Caltex gasoline station along Hadji Buto street. Wrapped inside was the butchered head of a kidnapped victim, the son of a Christian doctor who refused to pay the ransom...], Marie Jane recounts.

That was just the beginning recalls Marie Jane. This happened in mid-90's when kidnap for ransom incident in Sulu was hitting the newspapers. This was followed by another head found a few days later in San Raymundo barangay. The victim was allegedly a witness to the previous crime and had to be liquidated. A little later came the news of the Sipadan hostage taking in Malaysia by the notorious Abu Sayaf involving the Burnham couple. Jolo instantly shone in the global headlines not for anything else but as a 'hot spot' for hiding kidnapped victims, Marie Jane comments.

Marie Jane 23, was then in the elementary grade at the Notre Dame of Jolo College [NDJC]. She remembers her grandparents' constant warnings for her to stay inside the campus whenever any kind of commotion takes place. The NDJC that time had been providing the students with lectures to avoid hazards like mutiny and fire, Marie Jane narrates. She admits she used to imagine that Christians were being persecuted in Jolo because they often ended up victims of criminal acts. Jane confesses, she was almost certain the incidents had something to do with a religious conflict between Muslims and Christians. Especially after two Dominican nuns who served with the Sulu Leprosarium were kidnapped and allegedly molested before they were released. Her grandparents were adamant for her to carefully choose her "Muslim" friends.

In the past, particularly before the 1974 uprising Marie Jane's grandparents would say that "kidnappings were romantically and not materially motivated". They claim, "it was the last recourse a besotted Muslim suitor would take in desperation to marry a maiden who refused him. Other than that, kidnapping as money-making venture was never an option..."

Mary Jane was orphaned at an early age. Her maternal grandparents migrated to Jolo in the 1940's from Masbate. They were peace-loving farmers who found a place with the Joloanos. They have come to appreciate the Muslims and have learned much about their traditions. They are often quoted saying. "just like the Christians, there are good and bad Muslims...". The only public disturbance in the 1950's Mary Jane's grandparents would relate was when a "*sabil-ilah*" (juramentado) would run amok in public hitting anything or anyone with his "*kalis*" (a Muslim bladed weapon). "Before such event takes place however, the relatives of the *sabil-ilah* would make announcements over the radio warning the people not to stay in the streets. Bandits already roamed in the "*gimba*"(upland) but would confined their

activities there. They were called '*mundo*' by the native Joloanos...", Mary Jane's grandparents would narrate.

Mary Jane was told by her elders that, it was only after the declaration of Martial Law in 1972 that violence and acts of criminality have escalated. She remembers how her grandparents would talk about the fights of the *Baracuda* (Muslim led extremists) and the *Ilaga* (Christian led para-military group) in some parts of Lanao and Cotabato. An uprising was certainly brewing as a reaction to the *Jabidah Massacre* in the late 1960's, Mary Jane was informed. In Sulu, the mutiny began in February 7, 1974 and went on for almost a week and the entire province of Sulu was totally incommunicado because of the news blackout, she was told. "*Bang mag-suysoy na in mga kama-asan koh pasalan sin pag-bunoh kumangi in parasahan koh sin pag-patay mga tao iban pag-larak sin mga kapanyapan sin manusya..*"[Each time my family would talk about the 1974 siege, I would inwardly cringe in revulsion because of the gruesome killings and disrespect for lives and property], Mary Jane confesses.

Jolo's present condition for Mary Jane is by no means different from what it was during the war in terms of human sufferings. According to Mary Jane it is not only fear of the rising terrorism that alarms people nowadays in Jolo. Rather, it is more of the fear of how to continue surviving in the aftermath of the 1974 destruction of Jolo. The Joloanos thought Mary Jane were devastated by the previous war making them incapable of feeling deeply for their loss. Those who were victims of that tragic event Muslims and Christians alike have not completely healed and the social and economic crises they are now facing have only worsened the situation. One major consequence of that war, Mary Jane claims is poverty which has led socially displaced individuals to be engaged in all forms of banditry an example of which is

“kidnapping for ransom”. **As consequence Marie Jane feels that some Muslims became the oppressed and the oppressors of their own people.**

Mary Jane is now convinced that the kidnapping issue is not a “religious thing” after all. This however did not allay her apprehension against unscrupulous people who would like to make the whole scenario appear like a religious conflict. *“Tiyu-tiyo rah in Christians ha Jolo one-fourth rah sin total population. Mata-ud in Muslims dying kamoh. Sah masul in kidnap-pun Christians supaya in gumawa religious issue. Asal di ma-iig in buga ha atay namoh sawab in kata-uran victims Christians..”* [There are very few Christians in Jolo perhaps one-fourth of the total population. We are certainly outnumbered by the Muslims. But most of those being kidnapped are Christians, apparently to make a religious issue out of it. We naturally feel apprehensive since most of the victims are Christians...], Jane explains.

Presently, Mary Jane believes that the entire Sulu province is at war against **banditry**. If only the government through its military forces would strictly implement the laws against these criminal acts Mary Jane feels that the fears of the Joloanos would be mitigated. On the other hand, Mary Jane declares *“biya-di-in tumabang in manusya mga military bang in kai-banan kanila in nag-hi-hinang hilo wala..”* [How can the civilians cooperate with the law enforcers when some of them were the ones allegedly caught breaking it?], she questions. “There must be a way”, claims Mary Jane “for government officials and public servants to exercise honest and total commitment to public service especially the military, for peace and order to prevail. Otherwise, **heads would keep rolling** and kidnapping as a bloody enterprise would prosper...”, she points out.

## Alan

### *Guns, Goons and Gold*

**Guns, goons, and gold** according to Allan are presently the three G's a powerful Muslim family in Jolo should possess to stay on top of the social and political ladder. Tradition has always inspired a kind of clannish set up among the Taosugs but this became even more pronounced especially after the upheaval in 1974 as what Allan has learned for himself.

*“Bang sila mag-patay mata-ud in malapay. Way na bid-da Muslim ba kaha atawa Christian in kugdanan. Biya sila sin mga iro dupang walang paki-alam”*[When they fight, a lot of people get hurt Muslims and Christians alike. Like rabid dogs they couldn't care less who gets across...], describes Allan. At 26, Allan seemed to have experienced a lot for somebody so young. It is a common thing according to him, for the civilians in Jolo to witness a tug-of-war between two feuding Muslim clans. Clashes would just erupt anytime of the day without a warning.

Certainly, Muslim culture dictates that bravery is a “virtue”, claims Allan having born and thrived in a community where fighting seems to be a routine. However, Allan likewise believes that a true Muslim would only fight to defend his honor at all cost. Even the 1974 mutiny according to him manifested the willingness of the Muslim to protect Islam against perceived persecution even if many were misled into believing it was so. Allan thinks the realization came a little late among the Muslims that Marcos wanted to create a scenario of unrest in



Mindanao. The siege has caused immeasurable damage socially, psychologically and economically in Jolo and the entire province of Sulu that has persisted until now.

Allan's father used to be in the service of the Philippine Marines stationed in Jolo during the 1974 uprising. Just before the commotion his father met a Zamboanguena, his mother, married and settled in Jolo after the war. It has been Allan's dream to enter the Philippine Military Academy and admits how he idolizes the "Magdalo soldiers" who were recently involved in the Makati mutiny in Manila. He would also give all ears to his father's stories of the RAM boys and the first EDSA revolution. *"Kaba-ya-an ko tu-od maka-sud ha Philippine Military Academy. Maka-tabang ha mga tao iban maka-parayaw sin hula ha Sug"* {I really would like to graduate in the Philippine Military Academy so I can help people and make reforms especially in Sulu...]

Allan believes Jolo can be a peaceful place only if the Joloanos would properly use and not abuse power. *"In naka-ngii ha manusya di ha Jolo nahilo in uwoh sin alta iban power. Di na kita du-maa mag-buno bang makawa natos ha marayaw bitsara. In isog sin tao subay di ipag-abbu biya sin kaibanan Muslim nakurah yan awun ma-taas position ha parenta. Marayaw in nagsu-sulot"* [The problem with Jolo is that most people here are drunk with wealth and power. There is really no need to fight always if things can be settled peacefully. Courage should be considered as virtue and not vanity to be displayed like what some Muslim leaders occupying high positions in the community are now doing. It is still preferable to negotiate amicably..] **This situation has continuously placed the the Muslims and Chritians at the mercy of leaders who only speak the language of war** Allan explains.

The wars between families according to Allan are no longer private for they involve the entire community. On the other hand the justice system starting from the barangay level, Allan claims

do not seem to function even if respected local leaders are appointed to negotiate. And in some cases where parties agree to negotiate any monetary retribution for the aggrieved party only serves as palliatives. A slight provocation from any member of the feuding families can ignite the rift anew. It is common knowledge that most of those involved in the feuds used to be members of the *Magic Eight*. They were ex-rebels who became Marcos' protégées during the 1974 uprising, Allan learned about this from his elders. "*Biha-on lilibutan sila sin private army nila. Way maka-su-ok sawab nag-daraa sadja sinapang. Di mag-ba-ba ha kaw-ha-an in ta-ud sin tao-han nila.* [Nowadays these men are surrounded by their private army. No one would dare come close for fear of their high-powered ammunitions. Not less than twenty guards usually make up their team...], Allan observes. Even before the destruction of Jolo in 1974, Allan claims to hear stories of "ridos" or local fights for vengeance in the gimba (upland) because of the land grabbing problems mostly instigated during the Marcos rule and his amnesty policy. "A number of rebels were allegedly offered some previously owned lands that created most of the conflicts. Some of those who enjoyed this incentive were members of the *Magic Eight* believed to have continued monopolizing businesses in Jolo and continued warring among themselves to keep their elevated status in the community. Thus, what used to be an honorable act of defending one's honor in the past has turned into a show of arrogance among some Muslim feuding families hurting innocent bystanders in the process...", relates Allan. He believes that among the Muslims there are those who have remained honorable. "Awon ha mga Muslims maka-buga bang atohan awon da isab kanila in marayaw iban kapangandulan.." [**There are Muslims who are vicious fighters and those who have always been good and trustworthy...**], Allan adds.

*“Bukon marayaw in kiya-rihilan sin parenta alta, sinapang iban positions in kata-uran returnees. Mata-ud kanila in limandoh pag-ubos naka-kulang ha kasanang...”* [It was wrong for the previous government to have showered so much wealth, guns and positions to the returnees (ex-rebels). Many of them have become abusive after having tasted power...]. Allan believes that what is needed at present is for the people to understand that wielding too much power can destroy. The government, he maintains, should exert effort to get the cooperation of the Joloanos to reconstruct Jolo. It is absolutely essential for the government, he emphasized, to strictly implement local ordinances against illegal possession of firearm. The ‘gun ban’ at present, he claims, is just taken for granted because the police force does not care. There should be intensive moral and social rehabilitation programs that should not be mere propaganda and not just mere promises of positions, guns and gold for the people...”, Allan maintains.

The Muslim Co-Authors

(The Elderly)

**Babu Arag**

***Way Makahundong sin Pagbunoh***

(The War was Inevitable)

*“Bang awun dapa tmag-jihad kita....supaya makawa magbalik in katoh...Misan wakto naka-una asal in kama-asan natoh nag-sa-sabil supaya di makawa sin mga banyaga in Bangsa natoh... ”* [If necessary **we should fight a jihad** to retrieve what is rightfully ours..Even in the past our forefathers were fighting foreign invaders to protect our land...], Babu Arag spoke in behalf of the family.

The old woman claims they have been in possession of the land all their lives having inherited it from their forefathers. They get by from the farm that they till relying only on their strength and hard work. *“In lupa yan kamoh..Du-on na kami piyag-anak...du-on na kami matay...”* [The land is ours...We were born there...We certainly would die there...], laments Babu Arag.

*“Piyag-bahagi-an nila in lupa sin 1970. In hansipak ha parenta hinangun kunoh ka-iskulan, sah sampay bi-haon way rah nahinang. In hang-utod ha Christian sundalo nakurah. Awun na kunoh katas ha ngan sin tao ya-on. Sah way pang-hati namoh sin pa-iigon kami. Malugay na kami nag-huhula do-on iban sin pag-copra ha ka-niyogan namoh..”* [The land was divided between the government and a Christian military official sometime in 1972. With some

portion of the land, the government proposed to construct a school building which has not materialized until now. The other half was registered accordingly by this military official in his name. We had no idea we were to be evicted after having long occupied the land and harvested the “copra” from our coconuts...], disclosed Babu Arag.

The land is situated in Panamao one of the remote municipalities in Sulu. After the 1974 mutiny the problem worsened when the alleged owner gave up the land in favor of the government amnesty campaign. Babu Arag’s husband and a son fought and died in the upheaval. She maintains that fighting was the only option left for them that time as a form of redress for their grievances. She admits having no hold of the so-called “title” but insists on possessing a document which was awarded by the government sometime in the 1950’s. She calls it “garan” evidencing some kind of a “guarantee” of their ownership of the land. *“Hi siyo in dumungog kamoh in kami ini way pangadji? Asal panipu in parenta lawung sin kama-asan nato. Biya sin mga Kastila iban Milikan sambat pa sin manusya in diri-hilan kasañang in naka-pangadji sadja biya sin mga Christian...In mga Muslims naka-lamud kanila diyu-dupang nila...”* [Who would listen to illiterates like us? Our elders say the government is deceitful. Like the Spaniards and the Americans the government helps and favors only the educated ones like the Christians. While the Muslims among them are being manipulated....], complains the old woman.

The 1974 siege was destined to happen, Babu Arag believes. *“Way makahundong ha pag-bunoh...”* [**the war was inevitable...**]. There were a lot of sufferings that people had been through. Life for them became difficult especially after Jolo and the whole province of Sulu was militarized. She describes how the tao gimba were subjected to humiliating search and harassments by the Philippine Marines stationed in the area. *“Pok-pokon kaw sin sinapang nila*

*bang di kaw sumambong. In kaibanan timbakun na sadja bang umatoh kanila.. ”* [they would hit you with the barrel of their guns if you refuse to talk while others who showed resistance were instantly shot...].

Prior to the war, Babu Arag's family was forced to find a living in the town of Jolo after they were evicted from their land in Panamao. At times they would join their relatives in the next municipality to plant panggi (cassava) even when the condition in the gimba (upland) was worsening due to the increasing presence of the military and the pocket wars with the Maoists (rebels). Finally, her husband gave up farming and joined the rebels.

Babu Arag accepted her husband and son's death as destiny. *“Sukod ko na in ma-balo iban kamatayan anak. Marayaw pa in miyatay sila awun nahinang daying sin way...Nag-sabil sila supaya in parenta makahati sin karupangan hihinang nila ha biya kamoh miskin agawan lupa...”* [I am fated to become a widow and lose my son. I am glad they died for a cause than for nothing at all. They fought to show the government that they refused to tolerate its oppression against helpless landowners...], she reveals.

*“Wakto pag-bunoh in sibi-sibi tindahan sayul namoh nasunog. Marayaw sukod in walo anak ko yadto katan ha gimba iban sin apo nila. Way naka-piin pag-usaha namoh Piya-buus kami capital sin lasya namoh ampa kami nakapag-usaha mag-balik...”* [During the war our small vegetable stall was ravaged by fire. My eight kids were fortunate to have stayed with their grandparents in the upland. Nothing was left of our livelihood. It was only when we were loaned a capital by our relatives that we were able to start a small business...], Babu Arag recalls.

The aftermath of the war was clear in the memory of the old woman especially that time when talks of the TRIPOLI momentarily gave rise to new hopes of recovery. *“Asal nag-*

*suy-soy na in manusya sin pasalan TRIPOLI. Nag-sulot na kunoh in parenta iban mga Muslim nakurah sambat pa sin mga nakahati daying ha radio iban kata habal. Nagta-tagad kita sampay biha-on sin karayawan. Way pang-hati sin tao gimba biya kamoh bang uno in ARMM. In agi sin kaibanan in masu-ok rah kuno ha parenta in karihilan kawasa. Uno in lagi sin ARMM bang kiya-si-sigpitan da in manusya? Way ko rah nakawa mag-balik in lupa piyag umahan ko...*” [There were already talks about the TRIPOLI after the siege. The government and the Muslim leaders already had an agreement according to those who heard from the radio and read the newspapers. Until now we are still waiting for improvements to take place...Folks from the upland like us honestly have no idea what the ARMM is all about. Those who understand claim that only those favored by the government would benefit from it. In that case, what’s the use of ARMM if we continue to suffer? I was not even able to retrieve the land taken from us...], explains the old lady.

Today, Babu Arag describes the **Christian military** with contempt saying that they have continued to display **arrogance** because of the guns they carry. The **Chistian bisaya** (Christian Joloano civilians) on the other hand she observes have remained **aloof** from them ever since mainly because they share nothing in common.

Babu Arag presently occupies one of the cigarette stands near the Municipal Hall of Jolo adjacent to the Fire Department building. All her eight children are married and likewise engaged in buy and sell. The war, she admits has taught her to accept life

as it comes. Nevertheless, at 68 she has not given up the fight to get back her lost property. She believes that, “*Misan hi siyo subay di mabuga umatoh bang awon dapat...*” [anyone who has a good reason to fight should fight back at all cost....].

## Appendix B11

### **Jikirani**

#### ***Bagay atawa Banta***

(Friend or Foe)

There were twenty of them who were given assistance by the church to start a small fishing business in barangay Busbus in mid-1960s. The livelihood project thrived and prospered recalls Jikirani a 65-year old Tao higad (Samal sea dweller).

After a year membership in the project grew and they ventured on the sea weed culture (agar-agar) not having to worry about potential buyers since the priests already had prospects in the market. What they simply did was to deliver the raw products as agreed. The income generated from this business was accordingly more than sufficient to feed their families. Jikirani admits the partnership alleviated their condition enabling them to consider sending their children to public schools which had become popular among Muslim folks that time. “*Masañang in pag-usaha namoh iban sin pari. Sila in timatabang tu-od kamo bang kiyasi-sigpitan kami*” [We had a profitable livelihood project with the priests. They have always accommodated us in times of difficulty...], recounts Jikirani.



But as the story goes, something good is not meant to last, Jikirani stressed .The project failed to continue and they were told that it had to be indefinitely shelved because of the growing unease in the province. On their own, they continued with their fishing on a small scale renting motor boats like before. But good catch was hard to come by and the increasing presence of the government soldiers had complicated the situation,. *“Kaibanan militay mangayu sadja sila ista kamoh. Bang di kami maka-rihil masul di kami pa-iigon. Ibutang kami ha lawum barak sundalo asu-buhon misan way pang-hati namoh..In astul nila ha Maoists di hi-kasipat...mayta kunoh mangayo siin iban manimbak pari.”* [Some military would often demand fish supply from us. And if we refuse we were held captive inside the soldiers’ barracks for interrogation about things we had no idea. Their contempt of the Maoists was so intense, blaming them for the extortion incidents and assassination of priests..], disclosed Jikirani.

It was not only twice or thrice that Jikirani was held for questioning after a priest was shot. He confesses having felt betrayed by his friends from the church. He was convinced he and his fishing comrades were made suspects of the murder. And as he anticipated three of his friends were later arrested at the height of the rumors going around of the impending Maoists (rebels) attack. He heard that his friends were confined in one of the military stockades for torture. They never reappeared after the 1974 upheaval. Of course Jikirani thought that in times like that, anybody could have been a suspect. But this incident had immensely affected the feeling of gratitude he used to have for the church, he confides. *“Way dusa sin mga bagay ko in Tuhan in saksi. Di sila ‘ma-salvage’ bang way sila piya-kawa sin mga pari iban namoh ha mga sundalo..”* [My friends were innoce

nt God knows. They would not have been **salvaged** (liquidated) if the priests with whom we were working for in the past did not conspire with the soldiers for their arrest..], Jikirani laments.

The tragic events that followed during the siege of Jolo completely ruined Jikirani's dream of a better life. The motor boat he was renting was badly damaged by the "big fire". The home he took pains to construct near the sea was saved from the fire but was ransacked beyond recognition. For several days after the war broke on February 7, Jikirani and his family hid in the upland. He thought it was safe to make themselves less visible while the military was in hot pursuit. "*Di hika-sipat in sakit atay ko ha wakto ya-on. Mahunit in kuma-hagad kita mag-balik ha mga pari panipo. **Di kita makahati bang bagay atawa banta** in mga tao yan. Sambat pa sin tao-ma-as di kita maka-pag-sulot iban sin mga Christian Bisaya sawab di sila kapangan-dulan biya da sin tagna...Hangkan dah dii kitah masuson bang mag-jihad...*" [The hurt that I felt was overpowering those days. It is now difficult for me to trust the priests. We cannot be certain if they can be our **friends or foes**. Our old folks would say we can never settle with the Christian Bisayans for they cannot be trusted like in the past ...**It is only understandable if we fight a jihad...**], explains Jikirani.

When he decided to come back to Jolo shortly after the siege several priests he knew were re-assigned to Cotabato and Cagayan, he was told. The aftermath of the upheaval wrought havoc to Jolo, turning it into a ghost town. A number of Joloanos, Jikirani recalls migrated to Zamboanga and nearby provinces. He tried getting into all sorts of menial tasks. He was never good at selling he admits which most Muslims in the market were engaged in. After having driven a pedicab (tricycle) for several months he thought it was about time to get

back to what he wants to doing most “fishing”. Like all tao higad, the Samals are naturally drawn to the sea, says Jikirani.

The uprising did not spare the Samals from devastation in terms of livelihood. There is now scarcity of fish to catch. Unlike before, Jikirani explains, one consequence of the war was the emergence of big private fishing boats mostly owned by rebel returnees who have amassed wealth and businesses in Jolo. They have become suppliers of big canning factories in Zamboanga and even Sabah Malaysia. The turn of events drastically affected the livelihood of small fishermen. *“Di kita maka-ato ha mga tao yan. Makusog sila ha parenta labi na ha mga military. Maka-ulong inmiskin biya kato ha way na pag-usaha...”* [We can never compete with these people. They are favored by the government especially the military. Poor fishermen like us have become hopeless. There is nothing left to make a living...], reveals Jikirani,

It is very seldom that Jikirani goes out to sea nowadays. Instead he is seen roaming on foot around town selling fish as a middleman. Out of the sale he only gets a commission from the owner of the fishing boat. The arrangement is far cry from what he used to do as an independent fisherman. But the war has changed all that. Now each time Jikirani looks back to reminisce the better days when making a living was easy. He can’t help but think how some of his friends in the church have somehow given him both the reason to rejoice and to regret some things in life.

## **Hamba**

### ***Subay Miya-magad Kita ha Alon sin Kalinaw***

(We Should Glide with the Tide of Peace)

Hamba believes that war is reflective of the changing tide. It accordingly signals a social consciousness among the people to redirect their lives. He thinks that a revolution takes place when people feel they are left out. “*Wakto 1974 pag-bunoh, in mga Joloano limamud ha pag pinda sin kahawman.. In pipikil nila ika-rayaw ini sin manusya..*” [During the 1974 siege, the Joloanos thought there was a need for them to become involve in chartering their future in whatever manner they believed was best...], declares Attorney Hamjan, 65.

Attorney Hamjan or Hamba as he is known to most Joloanos is one of the few natives of Jolo who ventured and dared to broaden his horizon professionally according to western practice. Likewise learned in the ways of the *madrasah* (Arabic school), he speaks the Arab language like his native tongue and quotes verses in the *Qur'an* with familiarity.

His father, Apo Usman was a war veteran and was instrumental in exposing him as a child to the concept of education, having served as a companion of the American cavalry in the 1940's and a war ally during the Japanese occupation. His mother, Apo Mambang on the other hand was Hamba's rigid mentor in Arabic letters. She was well-versed in the words of the Qur'an and a noted *Manglu-lugo* (Qur'an reader) in the community. During her lifetime she would grace important Muslim occasions like the *pag-kawin* (wedding), *hinang pito* (prayers

for the dead) and the great feast of the *Ramaddan* (culmination of the Fasting period), to perform oral renditions of the *Qur'an* verses in exotic musical notes.

Hamba grew up appreciating the cultures of both the Christians and the Muslims. And this according to him has immensely fired his dreams of making the best of both worlds. After finishing secondary education in a public school in Jolo and realizing that selling newspapers and assisting a dentist were insufficient to send him to College, he stowed away in a cargo ship bound for Manila to actualize his goal. His talent in swimming was discovered and he started out as a varsity swimmer at the Manila Central University. This sustained him as a student in accountancy. By a stroke of luck he found himself a Christian foster family who provided him a home. “In kata-uran Christian leaders bagay koh in naha-rihil inspiration kakoh ha pag-talos ko sin pag-school..” [A number of my Christian friends who are noted leaders provided me the inspiration to finish schooling...], Hamba confessed. He got more than what he bargained for when he passed the licensure examination in accountancy and got himself a Christian bride from Cavite City. For a while he served as a cashier of the Commission on National Integration (CNI) believing in the government’s efforts to integrate the cultural minorities especially the Muslims to the national mainstream. The Commissioner that time was Abraham Rasul the husband of Santanina Rasul. Hamba pursued his studies in Law at the Far Eastern University and was one of the few Muslims to top Commercial Law in the Bar examination in this university.

Like the classic example of a success story, Hamba came back to his hometown in 1966 and found a niche in the fast prospering town of Jolo as a practising lawyer and later became the provincial treasurer of Sulu. “*Way hilo wala sin Jolo sin wakto yadto.*

*In Christians iban Muslims active tu-od ha pag-butang improvements ha Jolo iban ha Sug. In Provincial Capitol iban sin Museum nahinang wakto namoh iban hi Governor Sangkula, Mata-ud infrastructure in naka-tabang tu-od ha mga tao, biya sin school buildings, daan, ilaw iban tubig..”* [Jolo was a peaceful haven that time. Christians and Muslims alike initiated improvements in Jolo and the entire Sulu province. The Provincial Capitol and the Museum were constructed during our time with Governor Murphy Sangkula. A lot of infrastructure aided the people like: school buildings, roads, electricity and water supply], Hamba narrates.

The armed protests of the Muslims in 1974, Hamba maintains did not happen by chance. There was a succession of unfortunate circumstances that drove the people towards taking the tough decision of finally minding their own business, he claims. *“Mata-ud casualty ha mga Muslim civilians wakto yadto. Pag-pick-apon sin military masun din na pag-kakita-an. Misan ako wakto pag-bunoh piya-kawa sin military for interrogation. Mayta kunoh dumihil tabang ha mga Maoists. Amba na kami timbakun ha ‘firing squad’ bang way nag-hilo-wala. Marayaw sukod naka-ragan kami..”* [There was a lot of Muslim civilian casualty that time. A number of them were apprehended never to be seen again. I, myself was a victim of false accusations. I was taken by the military for interrogation to explain my alleged association with the Maoists. It was pure luck when I escaped death in the nick of time. I was already lining up for firing squad when a commotion distracted the Marines and we were able get loose...], recounted Hamba.

The 1974 uprising, believes Hamba was generally an act of defiance against ‘oppression’. The oppressive climate that time claims Hamba, was contagious. It created a fertile ground for abusive activities not only by some military but by any opportunist who took advantage to aggrandize himself. It was therefore not in any sense a religious or ethnic conflict,

clarifies Hamba. The final blow came for Hamba when he was ousted from office together with other provincial officials for their alleged seditious acts of aiding the enemies (Maoists) and illegal possession of firearms which he claims were unfounded. They were summarily dismissed from office without due process and were ordered to be arrested. That was how he was taken for interrogation. The 'oppression' therefore Hamba believes did not necessarily come from the military alone, ambitious local politicians were key actors in the play. He accordingly, was literally prosecuted by two of his colleagues in the government service in cahoots with some military officials. He therefore was forced to leave Jolo with his family. He was however luckily re-assigned with the Bureau of Local Government Finance in region nine.

To his mind, the 1974 siege in Jolo signified a stage of decadence among the Joloanos wherein some Muslims became both the *oppressors and the oppressed*. The oppressors were in essence used by the instigators to further their goal so the former became involved for material gain, thinks Hamba. On the other hand those oppressed fought to be heard but some ended up oppressing their own people in the process as they got blinded by power.

Hamba believes that 'oppression' in Jolo continues but put in a different light. "*Bang bista-hon nato in naghi-hinang kangi-an biya sin extortion iban kidnapping marayii daying ha katoh rah sa dirihilan support ha guwa supaya mahilo-wala in Sug, papag-kaluhon in Christians iban Muslims..*" [If we come to think of it, those who create problems here like extortion and kidnapping nowadays may have come from our own people but supported from outside, to create a picture of conflict between the Christians and Muslims..], explains Hamba. With the advent of the Tripoli Agreement however, Hamba thinks the chances of a better future are great. "*Marayaw in nakapag-sulot na in parenta iban mga taimanghud nato daying sin way. Amo sadja subay pipikil nato in karayawan sin kata-uran..Subay in mga nakurah*

*nag-paragan sin ARMM in mag-pakita marayaw example ha manusya...*” [It is fortunate that our government and our Muslim brothers have come into an agreement rather than not at all. We should concern ourselves with serving the needs of our people. The ARMM officials and leaders should be the ones to set good examples to our people..], he observes. The good of the majority of the Muslims and Christians alike according to Hamba should always come first and not our personal interests for the latter can ultimately cause *oppression*. Only then Hamba declares, can the Joloanos flow swiftly along a peaceful stream towards a bigger ocean of progress. Perhaps this time he adds, we should opt for a peaceful rather than a violent revolution, “Subay miya-magad kita ha alon sin kalinaw ...” [We should glide with the tide of peace...].



(The Middle-Aged)

## Hadja Fatima

### *In Sundalo Iban Maoists Sibbo-Sibo Nagmula* (The Soldiers and Rebels were mere Victims)

Hadja Fatima was eighteen when the war broke. Her family resided near Hadji Buto Elementary School, named after one of the few successful Muslim leaders then who represented Sulu province in congress in the 1950s. Her parents were both employed before as teachers in the school thereby inspiring her to pursue the same career. Now, a strong-minded school administrator, she is convinced that the soldiers and rebels in the 1974 war were mere victims of a personal whim.

February 6, on the eve of the war, they were ushered towards the school premises for safety by a band of armed men she identified as Maoists (Muslim rebels). On the third day of non-stop bullet exchange they were again escorted by some government soldiers to the Philippine Constabulary Camp in barangay Asturias. *“Nag-bayta in mga sundalo bukon na kuno marayaw tapukan in school kiyaru-ro-unan namoh. Marayaw sukod miyagad kami ha mga marines.. Bang way marayii biya na kami sin diyan-dang ista pasalan sin sunog dakula...”* (The soldiers insisted it was no longer safe for us to hide in the school premises. Fortunately, we were able to escape with them otherwise we would have been roasted in the big fire like fishes..), recalled Hadja, now a well-respected supervisor in one of the school districts in the province. What she tried to emphasize in her narrative was that on separate occasions the Maoists and the soldiers manifested concern for their welfare at the height of the bloodiest battle ever to have taken place in the history of Sulu.

“I failed to see the irony of the situation as a teenager. But as I recollected the events of the past, it dawned upon me that what appeared as military atrocities on the one hand and the rebels’ acts of violence on the other were actually the doings of one ambitious man- Marcos...”, observed Hadja. For her, what may have emerged as a struggle for dominance between the soldiers and the rebels were in reality a game played by former president Marcos with destiny. *“Maka-ulong in mga sundalo iban Maoists piyag-buno. Asal in ha lawum atay hi Marcos sin wakto yadto makawa niya in Sabah Malaysia. Ampa bang bistahun in Sultanate sin Sulu in awon dapat. Hangkan dah piya-pag kalo niya in manusya di ha Mindanao di kato ha Sug. Ini in suy-soy sin mga naka-ingat tao ma-as...”* (It was pathetic how the soldiers and the rebels were provoked to fight each other. Marcos had always wanted to get hold of Sabah in Malaysia that time even when the rightful authority really belongs to the Sultanate of Sulu. And so, he

instigated chaos among our people in Mindanao particularly here in Sulu. This was according to some of our elders who knew...), explained Hadja.

“It is true that there were untold stories of inhuman acts perpetuated by the government military as well as the Maoists during the war”, claimed Hadja. But these accordingly were triggered out of desperation by both sides to gain an edge over the other for reasons they both believed were valid. “The soldiers were ordered to liquidate the Maoists because they were threat to the country’s security while the latter did what they had to do to protect the Bangsamoro”, she continued. Hadja was convinced that both sides were heedless of what truly went on behind the scene. *“In mga sundalo iban mga Maoists way naka-ingat sin sila pa-pag kaluhon hi Marcos supaya mag-hilo-wala in lupa Sug...Ampa in banus miyatay ha pag-buno. Di agun ma-itong in nakalamud bata iban tao ma-as. Nag-agad na in Christian iban Muslim...”* (The soldiers and the Maoists never suspected the ulterior motive of Marcos which was to bring disharmony among our people and turmoil in Sulu province. The casualties as a result of the war were incalculable. The victims included the young and the old. Even the Christians were not spared.

The psychological impact of the war according to Hadja Fatima was grave for those who witnessed the tragedy. The consequences were many in terms of the deplorable economic condition of the Joloanos and the deteriorating relationship between the Muslims and the Christians she believes have lingered. *“Mata-ud in way naka-hati sin kabun-nalan ha taikud sin pag-buno. Misan biha-on yan pa in sakit iban buga ha lawum atay sin manusya. Yan na in nag-karayahan ha alta tiyakaw ha kai-banan biya sin Magic Eight. Yan na in paso sin pangatayan sin kaibanan Muslim ha mga Christian sundalo. Subay kita na in lumawag pasalan ha pag-suwara supaya ma-ratung nato mag-balik in dayaw sin pag-agad sin Christian iban Muslim sin naka-una...”* (Many of us did not comprehend the veracity behind the tragic incident. Even today, sorrow and trepidation still overwhelm our hearts. There were cases of people becoming rich from the spoils of the war, like the Magic Eight. They were Muslim ex-rebels who sided with Marcos. There was also the feeling of distrust elicited and thereafter harbored by the Muslims against the Christian military and vice versa. Indeed, there is presently a need for us to find occasions for serious dialogues to bring back our fruitful past), Hadja Fatima stressed.

The wounds of the past have not completely healed Hadja Fatima believed. The effort to reach out and seek genuine understanding between the aggrieved victims of war and the government according to her should not be left to chances. The peace pact entered into between the government and some representatives of the people in Mindanao she claims is half-hearted. Even with the establishment of the Autonomous region she stressed, the worsening state of poverty among the people especially among the Muslims in Sulu in the aftermath of the war was never addressed. Furthermore having been educated all her life in a community where Christians thrive, she contradicted the impossibility of a harmonious relationship with them. She believes however that real conflict between Christians and Muslims can always arise since the notion can easily be exploited by unscrupulous leaders at the grassroots with the government military and the Muslim rebels as the most viable vehicles to instigate disorder.

## Alona

### *In Karupangan sin Parenta*

(The Abuses of the Government)

*“Mata-ud in Muslims miyatay ha Jabidah Massacre sin 1968. Ini in way na-iig ha pikilan koh misan bata pa ako. Sambat pa sin kama-asan biya kita sin mga manok, piyugutan uwoh..way naka-ato ha parenta...”* [Several Muslims died in the Jabidah Massacre of 1968. This never left my mind even as a child. Our old folks would say, we were slaughtered like chickens unable to give the government a fight...], reveals Alona.

Alona’s uncle, Bapa Hael almost suffered the same fate as his colleagues. “they say our men were recruited for a special mission somewhere in Manila only to find out later it was in Corregidor, Bataan. Several Muslim trainees were taken from Jolo. The rest came from other parts of Mindanao. *“Way naka-agad in uncle koh sawab nag-anak in asawa misan bukon pa wakto. Pag-iig sin kaibanan pila bulan kami nag-tagad news kanila sah way naka-ratung kamoh. In news sin pag-patay kanila kiya-rungugn na sadja namoh ha radio iban newspapers. Asal miyumuga na kami...”* [My uncle was forced to stay behind because his wife gave birth prematurely. For months after the departure of the other trainees, no news was forthcoming. We only heard the news of the massacre from the radio and newspapers confirming our earlier suspicion of foul play..], confessed Alona. Accordingly, the trainees were coerced into overthrowing the military forces in Sabah, Malaysia. Upon learning of this secret mission the trainees withdrew and as a consequence were allegedly liquidated to keep the public from knowing. This took place at the height of Marcos’ claim over Sabah, Alona narrates. *“Di nato*

*masu-son in mga Muslim taimanghud nato ha sila imatoh ha parenta sin 1974. Wakto yadto in MNLF in naka-rihil kusog kanila. Marayii bukon katan Muslims in nag-baya sin pag-bunoh. Sah di hika-sipat in dugal ha pangatayan sin manusya. Nakalandu rah tu-od in karupangan sin parenta hi Marcos...*" [Our fellow Muslims cannot be blamed for having fought the government in 1974. It was the MNLF (Moro National Liberation Front) who gave them the strength and support. Perhaps not all Muslims wanted the war. But it nevertheless provided them a venue to ventilate their grievances. **The Marcos government was guilty of abusing its power...**], argues Alona. And for this reason, she believes that the 1974 war somehow revived the old wounds of distrust among Muslims and Christians in the colonial past.

The war, Alona explained was never a religious issue otherwise she claims she would not have found herself married to a Christian in its aftermath. She met her husband as a commerce student at the Notre Dame of Jolo College in 1985. She accordingly would not have escaped his ardent pursuit even if her family literally blocked his path, for she admittedly was also besotted to him. *"In bana koh mastal koh tagna ha philosophy sin College days. Bakas siya seminarian sah way na naka-talos pag-pari sapantun pamaya-maya niya kakoh. Sah na kami miya-guy pa Zamboanga sawab way tu-od miyaya in mga lasya ko kanya. Way rah nahinang nila...nakapag-kawin rah kami.."* [My husband used to be my college professor in philosophy. He used to be a seminarian. But he gave up priesthood when he courted me. We eloped to Zamboanga because my family did not approve of him. There was nothing they can do. We were eventually married according to Muslim rites...}, Alona revealed.

Like her husband who is now in the government service, Alona is assigned as a treasurer in one of the municipalities in Sulu. At 40, she is still the beautiful maiden who

captivated an Ilocano for a husband. She admits having endured a difficult relationship at first, trying to find a balance between her love for her husband and her family. They finally found a peaceful arrangement after years of adjustment. One that bespeaks of respect for each other's culture, Alona discloses. Now, they have four kids who are exposed to the ways of both Muslims and Christians. Their children are trained in the *Madrasah* (Arabic school) and are regular students of the Notre Dame Elementary School, a Dominican educational institution. "*Bunnal in mga tao ma-as dii kato maluman ha mga Christians sawab in sila bukon siboh in panga-hagari ha Muslims. Sah bang way dapat mayta kita ma-munoh kanila?*" [It is true our old folks here have some reservations towards the Christians because they are aware that the latter have different set of beliefs from the Muslims. But why should we fight them for no particular reason?], asks Alona.

“The 1974 conflict in Jolo would seem to portray a religious problem between Muslims and Christians, comments Alona. But, her personal experience of the tragedy has proven otherwise. “*Nag-a-agad in Christians iban Muslims sin pag-bunoh. Mata-ud in miyatay ha bombings iban pag-sunog. Way pag-pii bang hi siyo in kug-danan sin timbak atawa mortar daying ha sikatuna iban navy. Hi siyo in maka-pikil in nag-bu-bunoh Christians iban Muslims bang kiya-sa-sakitan na kita sibo-sibo? Misan biha-on hangka-kapal rah in iya-a-agan nato katan pasalan sin hilo-wala di ha Sug..*” [Christians and Muslims suffered together during that fateful incident. Many became casualties of the bombings and the “big fire”. No one was spared from the firings coming from the *sikatuna* (war tank) and the navy...Who would even imagine the war was between the Christians and the Muslims when both were injured? Even now we have continued to sail in the same boat especially with the volatile condition that has persisted in Jolo...], demands Alona.

A lot of things have changed in the aftermath of the war, claims Alona. Foremost is the people's "*buga*" (paranoia) towards any kind of commotion, she reveals. With the skirmishes of feuding families who are mostly notorious members of the *Magic Eight*, the situation accordingly has worsened. The reasons for their quarrels she believes are often centered on political rivalry. Eversince the destruction of Jolo the peace and order condition has therefore not improved. There were talks of "war rehabilitation programs" but as far as she is concerned, very few have materialized. And if there were those that were implemented, the benefits have not gone to the rightful beneficiaries since many Joloanos claims Alona, have little or practically no knowledge of this. "*Mura-murahan bang bunnal tu-od tumabang in parenta hinangon nila katan in hika-rayaw sin kata-uran manusya ha Jolo Christian atawa Muslim*. [If there is truth in the willingness of the government to help, it should do everything within its power to alleviate the conditions of both Christian and Muslim war victims], concludes Alona.

Appendix D 15

### **Muksan**

#### ***In Kusog sin Nakurah ha Pag-buno***

(The Strength of the Leader to Wield War)

Conflict in Jolo no matter how big or small often relies on the ability of the "*nakurah*" (leader) to command followings. He becomes the crusader of the people to carry on a legacy to protect his homeland- the *Bangsamoro*, reveals Muksan a 49-year old Taosug barter trader. The 1974 war, he believes reflected on the popularity of Nur Misuari then as the head of the MNLF (Moro National Liberation Front) when he had the will of the Muslims in his hands.

*“Bihan di kato ha Sug, bang hi siyo in ma-isog, siya in dungu-gon sin manusya. Bang marayaw in nakurah maraah niya kataan in tao niya ha karayawan..”* [That is the tradition here in Sulu. **Whoever has the power to command authority becomes the leader** with whom the people seek protection and advice. A good leader radiates goodwill among his men and brings them to prosperity], explains Muksan. The leader plays a vital role in motivating the followers toward a certain goal, Muksan points out. Only when the leader has proven his worth through fortitude that the subordinates are driven to follow him. His followers would move heaven and earth to protect him. And even “death” is not an obstacle as long as they have in their hearts the trust and confidence of the “*nakurah*”, he added.

Muksan recounts how a number of Muslim fighters risked and lost their lives in the 1974 siege. They, according to him were convinced that somehow something good will come out of the fight. The MNLF’s demand for self-autonomy, claims Muksan is in reality literally transmitted to mean among the Joloanos “*maka-iig sin ka-sigpit nila*” [a solution to all their woes...]. This definition according to Muksan is how the Muslims in Jolo generally understand “autonomy”. “*Wakto yadto in kata-uran Muslim manusya nagka-hagad maka-bangon sila ha ka-sigpit. Way na sila naka-pikil bang biya di-in atawa bang mayta mag-bunoh pa..*” [That time, many of the Muslim folks were convinced that they will be alleviated from their difficulty. They failed to consider how this could be possible and why fighting was necessary...], comments Muksan.

When the Tripoli Agreement was concluded between the government and the MNLF in the aftermath of the upheaval, Muksan describes how his relatives rejoiced in anticipation of a lot of improvements in Jolo and the province of Sulu. Foremost in the minds of the Joloanos says Muksan was “*pag-dayaw sin parenta sin liyu-bo sin bunoh iban kari-hilan pag-usaha in*

*mga manusya kiya-la-wa-an hinang...* ” [reconstruction of the government of the havoc of war and the implementation of livelihood programs for the displaced victims...]. Until now the Joloanos according to Muksan are still waiting for developments to take place. And the countless promises held out to them by their “nakurah”, Nur Misuari have accordingly been short of their expectations. *“Gaam-man kiya-sigpitan na kami ha pag-usaha barter pu-as bunoh pasalansin ma-taud bayaran ha parenta. Pag-saggawun sin sundalo in tiyu-tiyo maraah namoh hi-pag-dagang daying ha Sabah. Masuun subay dir-rii-hilan da isab sila supaya di kaw saggawon...”* [The hardships we experienced after the war were even doubled because of so many taxes we have to pay the government. The soldiers would confiscate the little amount of goods we brought in from Sabah. We usually have to dole out something for them to stop them from confiscating our goods...], confessed Muksan.

For a while, the leadership of Nur Misuari gave the people hope of recovery from their sad state. Muksan recalled how a number of Muslim fighters gave their lives for a cause which they never questioned believing that soon enough their sacrifices would be over. In short, Muksan clarified the people completely surrendered their fate to a leader whose reputation was yet unblemished. *“Kiya-ki-ta-an koh bang biya-di-in in ma-as iban bata imatoh ha pag-bunoh sin 1974. Wakto ya-on way ha Sug hi Misuari. Bihan in kusog sin **barakat** niya ha mga Muslim manusya. Sah way niya napikil in nahinang sin mga tao miya-magad kanya. Nasilaw rah siya ha alta iban kasanyang diihil kanya hi Marcos iban sin kaibanan..”* [ I witnessed how the old and the young fought in the 1974 war. That time Misuari was not even in Sulu. That was how powerful he was with the Muslim folks. He took for granted the sacrifices of his followers however. He was blinded by wealth and position he was offered by Marcos and his successors...], disclosed Muksan.



When the ARMM (Autonomous Region for Muslim Mindanao) was later implemented, this gave them another issue to ponder, claimed Muksan. *“Bunnal awam in ka-ta-uran Muslim manusya bang uno in Tripoli Agreement . Sambat pa sin naka-ingat ini kunoh in parakala makarihil kasanyang katoh. Pag-guwa sin ARMM gaam-man na-inoh-inoh kita bang mayta way rah na-iig in manusya ha kasig-pit...”* [It is true many Joloanos have little knowledge of the Tripoli Agreement. Those who claim to understand thought the treaty would literally liberate the Muslims from poverty. When the ARMM was implemented, we were puzzled even more because our sorry state never improved...]. These “war rehabilitation programs” explained Muksan were loans granted to MNLF surrenderees in the aftermath of the war. He claimed that the money was in actuality not utilized in agricultural farms and other livelihood projects. The war programs of the government according to Muksan have failed and triggered tension among the Joloanos themselves. There is apparently poor leadership on the part of Muslims who according to Muksan should have been the ones speaking in behalf of their own people.

It is rare according to Muksan for a Muslim to be accorded the same station that Misuari used to have which made his arrest regrettable. The only redeeming aspect of Misuari’s leadership, Muksan commented was *“na-raah hi Misuari mag-bisara in parenta iban na-pahati niya in **ummah** sin kasig-pit sin manusya di ha Bangsamoro”* [Misuari was able to dialogue with the government and bring to the attention of the larger Muslim community the plight of the Muslims in Bangsamoro...}.

(The Young Adults)

**Abdil**

*Nasa-sag-gaw sadja Ha Gi-tungan Bunoh*

(Always Caught in the Crossfire)

*“In mga miskin biyah sin katoth ini na-sa-sag-gaw sadja ha gi-tungan pag-bunoh.*

*Misan bukon kalo natoth asal kugdanan dah kita sin timbak bang nag-bu-bunoh in tao dakulah...”* [The poor like us are always caught in the crossfire even if it’s not our fight. We get hit by bullets when the powerful people start fighting...], declares Abdil.

Feuding families, according to Abdil is a usual occurrence in Jolo. Without warning a fight can just erupt anytime and anywhere. The encounters can be brief or intermittent depending on the gravity of the cause. And the damage inflicted on both sides to include the innocent bystanders depends on the strength of the ammunition and the number of private army the warring clans employ, says Abdil.

*“Bunnal misan hi siyo kugdanan sin timbak sah mason in mga miskin in magmula.*

*Bang kitah matay way mag-pa-ka-un ha asawa iban anak. Way na pag-hukom. Masun bang mag-hukom patayon dah in lumamud..”* [It is true anybody can get injured by stray bullets but in most cases it’s the common man who suffers most. Nobody gets to feed his family when the poor fellow dies...Court hearings and amicable settlements are not popular among the people. Even those who try to mediate often get killed...], reveals Abdil. His lack of concern towards bloody incidents may have resulted from his constant exposure to a volatile environment. His grandparents and other relatives were among the victims in the 1974 uprising in Jolo. *“Di ha*

*Jolo, way na buga sin mga miskin biya kamoh ha pag-patay...Asal da bang wakto mo no na, matay rah kaw...*” [Here in Jolo, killing no longer scare poor people like us. Anyhow if it is your time to die...you just have to go..], Abdil remarks candidly. His opinion about the Christians furthermore does not really say much except “di da tu-od sila lumamud-lamud ha mga Muslims. Mara-yii mabuga ataw ma-luman hatiko. Ma-i-tong ko rah ha lima ko in na-mi-miih siga kako. Way pang-hati ko bang mayta sila masul in kidnapon...Di da ma-uno bang di sila mag-pangasip...” [They don’t get to socialize much with the Muslims.Perhaps they are scared or shy? I have no idea why they usually become targets of kidnapping...It does not really matter if they keep their distance...], he confides.

His grandparents he was told used to have a small coffee shop near the central market when the mutiny started. The couple was trapped inside when the “big fire” started burning the store simultaneously. His parents were in the upland that time harvesting the copra from the little coconut farm they were tilling. The war began and they had to hide in the upland for a while. On the third day just when “big fire” broke they were forced to come downtown. Jolo was already ravaged by fire when they came back. There was nothing to rescue not even bodies to bury in the market amidst burning structures where his grandparents had there little store.. Abdil would often hear his parents talk about their ordeal especially that part when his uncle after the upheaval was shot by a government army in his own farm when he refused to leave the place while harvesting his crops. Much later his parents unfortunately got caught in a shootout between the soldiers and the MNLF. From that time onwards their family rarely visited the farm depriving them of the little income they get from the copra.

At 22, Abdil is supporting two wives and a brood of eight by selling cigarettes in the streets. He never had the chance to get an education. When they were able to harvest their

copra in the past his family thought of sending him to school. But after the mutiny when the military operations in the *gimba* (upland) worsened, the idea was abandoned.

*“Makusog in pag-daragang siga di ha da-ira. Ma-ta-ud in mani-niga di kato. Sah bang awun wakto kiya-si-sigpitan na tu-od ako dumag-gang na sadja “shabu”. Asal dah way managgaw. Misan in police kaibanan user dah..”* [Selling cigarettes is a profitable business here in town. Many Joloanos smoke a lot. At times when I am in dire need, I sell “shabu”. The policemen really don’t mind since some of them are also users..], Abdil reasons.

Abdil claims that almost the same wealthy people and their followers fight like “*iro dupang*” (rabid dogs) over property and government positions. “If anybody interferes, he gets shot. And if he does not intervene, he gets killed anyway if he happens to be within the firing range of the squabbling groups”, he explains. *“Mata-ud in napinda sin pag-bunoh 1974 in agi sin mga ka-ma-asan namoh...In miskin tagna masanyang na bi-haon. Bang bakas in sundalo in mamunoh biha-on mga Muslim sibo-sibo in mag-patay in kata-uran kanila balikbayan “* [The 1974 war has changed a lot. Those who used to have little are enjoying comfort from the government. If in the past the military where the ones terrorizing the people, now it’s the wealthy Muslim ‘balikbayans’ (rebel returnees) who are mostly causing disturbance in town...], disclosed Abdil.

*“Misan tagna in mga Christian Bisaya di ha Jolo asal di mag-kaiba sawab mabuga malapay ha hilo-wala iban bunnal tiyo-tiyo rah sila. Sah bang bistahon sibo-sibo rah kita niyo in kiya-si-sigpitan ha pag-bu-bunoh biha-on.”* [ Even before, the Christian Bisayans here in Jolo have kept a low profile because they never wanted to get involve in these conflicts and besides there are only few of them. Nevertheless, we all are victims of these ceaseless fights...], Abdil relates.

The poor like them, Abdil confessed don't talk much of choices in life because "Amo rah in tao dakula in mag-baya bang mag-bunoh. In kita ini na-sassag-gaw sadja ha tunga..." the choice to fight according to him is for the strong and not for the weak. They are simply caught in the crossfire...

## Appendix B17

### Nuraiza

#### *Kitah in Mag-baya bang Mag-bunoh atawa Mag-sulot*

(We Choose between War and Conciliation)

*"Ha lugay sin wakto nag-bubunoh na sadja in ka-ma-asan do ha lupa Sug, biha-on subay kitah na in mag-baya bang mag-bunoh atawa mag-sulot..."* [For ages our forefathers were always at war...Today, **we should be the ones to decide whether we want war or peace to prevail...**], asserts Nuraiza.

At 23, Nuraiza has the optimism and a gift of gab rarely seen among her peers. She admits that this attitude is brought about by her exposure in an academe where varied cultures thrive. The Notre Dame of Jolo has been her Alma Matter since primary grades until she graduated with a Nursing diploma last year. She talks of her plans of working in the Middle East with her maternal aunts after she makes it in the licensure examination. Both Nuraiza's parents are employed in the government. After she graduated, she continued to be actively involved in socio-civic activities with the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) of the

NDJC (Notre Dame of Jolo College) apostolate. She would describe proudly the accomplishments of the group in community and extension services with its Peace Center where she belongs as a peace advocate.

Nuraiza often talks of her gratitude toward her Christian colleagues in the JPIC-Peace Center for their encouragements and broadmindedness. She claims to have learned more about the wisdom of ‘conciliation’. At the same time she is glad her friends have accommodated her for what she is and likewise have continued learning from her about Islamic precepts. She recounts having participated in several peace seminars in different parts of the country- enjoying the exchange of ideas with young Muslim and Christian peace advocates like her. If given the opportunity she hopes to be able to join an international peace convention.

*“Bukon marayaw in nagpipikil na sadja kita sin pag-bunoh. Way mahinang karayawan in nag-kakalo sdja. Subay in baya nato mag-sulot yari ha lawum atay. Bukon ha bitsara sadja. Supaya kakita-an nato bang kita harap na paka-in...”* [It is not good to be thinking of fighting all the time. Nothing constructive comes out of it. The will to reconcile should come from our hearts and not from words only. That is the only time we shall see where we are heading to...], explains Nuraiza.

It is true, Nuraiza claims that in the past she used to hurt deeply when she hears some Christians would make irresponsible remarks like **“only dead Muslims are good Muslims”**. This, she points out is one stereotype that is hard to swallow. Like some Christians, she argues if there are bad Muslims there are also good ones. Oftentimes careless remarks like that, Nuraiza claims can provoke unpleasant encounters between Muslims and Christians. Presently however, she has learned to brush aside prejudicial comments which she believes can only bring out the worst in anybody if one pays attention to it. “In ha pikilan koh bukon bihan in katan

Christians..”[I believe not all Christians think that way...], reveals Nuraiza. “*Misan in pag-tuturong koh ini nahinang pasalan pag-kalo koh iban sin ham-buok Christian bisaya ha College days. Mayta kunoh subay nag-tatabon sadja kita manta misan adlaw mapasu? Ha Islam in babae subay nag-tuturong...*” [I once even had a fight with a Christian bisaya during my College days when she commented about the veil I was using. She was deliberately provoking an argument when she asked why I had to wrap myself up all the time when it’s terribly hot during the day? In Islam the women should preferably cover her hair with a “turong”...], Nuraiza recounts one harrowing incident which manifested a misunderstanding between Christians and Muslims.

The 1974 war may have been similarly triggered by wrong beliefs, declared Nuraiza. “Perhaps the government and the Muslim rebels’ suspicions of one another were magnified. It grew out of proportion that they were pushed to actualize their hatred of each other with series of violent moves that culminated with the siege of Jolo...”, explains Nuraiza. The blunder, according to Nuraiza was that, both parties failed to consider talking and settling amicably before having taken drastic actions that took innocent lives.

Nuraiza would listen attentively to her elders’ narratives of the war. They are a big family and she is fifth in a brood of ten. The “**big fire**” that she often heard from the stories would often give her nightmares, she confessed. Each narrator would try to explain why the war happened the way it did. But still, she could not find it in herself to accept its “**inevitability**”, she stressed. “*In pag-bunoh bukon biya sin hunos atawa kamatay sin tao in Tuhan in mag-baya. Asal tao in mag-baya kita rah in maka-hundong sin pag-bunoh...*” [The “war” is not like a storm or death that the creator wills. It is willed by men... and therefore something that they can prevent...], clarified Nuraiza.

**Hussein*****Di dah Ma-unoh bang di Umatoh***

(It is Alright not to Fight)

*“Pangan-nal sin kaibanan taimanghud nato in ka-isog sin Muslim subay piya-ki-kitah sadja ha pag-bunoh. **Di rah ma-unoh bang di kitah umatoh.** In ‘maratabat’ sin Tausog way ha ta-as sin pangatayan niya. In bunnal tao ma-isog di mamin-sana. Gaam-man huminang karayawan ha manusya. In miyu-noh sin 1974 misan way dapat iban sin hilo-wala ha da-ira biha-on way nag-pakita sin bunnal ‘maratabat’ sin Taosug..”* [Some Muslims believe that a person’s bravery is only demonstrated in battles. At times, **it is alright not to fight.** The true ‘maratabat’ (pride) of a Tausog goes beyond mere audacity. A truly brave warrior is noble enough not to cause another man’s injury. Instead, he seeks to rectify a wrong. Those who recklessly fought in 1974 and those who continued warring today do not possess the ‘true maratabat’ of a Tausog.], declares Hussein.

Having learned the virtue of a true ‘maratabat’ from his elders and the **‘Jihad-al-akhbar’** (a non-government Muslim organization of which he is an active member), Hussein endeavors to share his insights with his friends. Hussein is taking up Islamic studies at the Mindanao State University in Jolo. He spends most of his time with the Jihad-al Akhbar assisting in its community services. The meaning of ‘Jihad-al-Akhbar’, explains Hussein is “the greatest struggle”. Thus, for him the greatest struggle is for the Muslims to resist fighting



and to spread the teachings of the Qur'an through peaceful means. Presently, he is actively engaged in a series of “**suwarah**” (dialogues) with the multi-sectors in the community.

The concept of a “dialogue” Hussein admitted has changed so much of his earlier notions. And at 29, he claims to have realized the wisdom of sharing his thoughts through dialogues especially about something that concerns his faith. He believes that by expressing how he feels about things, there are greater chances that others would understand his true intentions. *“Bukon in pag-bunoh in maka-pahati ha manusya bang unoh in ha lawum pikilan moh. Marayaw in mag-suwarah kita iban sin tao taimanghud nato supaya kitah kaha-tihan. Ampa marayaw rah isab in kitah maka-hati bang unoh in pipikil nila ha pag-suwarah...”* [Fighting should therefore not always come as a priority in making people understand what we have in mind. It is good to be able to make people see things the way we do by sharing. In the process, we are also able to see what is in their minds through dialogues...], explained Hussein.

The Local government-ARMM (Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao), the Department of Education, the Catholic Church through the NDJC (Notre of Dame of Jolo College) and the Sulu Chamber of Commerce have been co-sponsoring the “suwarah” series of dialogues with the Jihad-al-Akhbar foundation in the town of Jolo. The discussions according to Hussein usually centered on the significance of inculcating Islamic values among the youth; the peace and order problems; health and sanitation; the rising unemployment and congestion in the area. Last August 2004, claims Hussein top military officials from Manila were invited to join their forum on the BALIKATAN

US-RP military operations in Sulu. The forum is accordingly being initiated once a month and aired over the local radio stations.

Since the war broke in 1974, Hussein confirms that progress in Jolo is slow moving. The entire province he describes was ruined socially and economically. His relatives even thought of migrating to Sabah, Malaysia for a while to start a new life. But against all odds they decided to stay on. He maintains there were attempts from the local government and sectoral groups to initiate improvements after the siege. His family would speak of the ‘conciliation programs’ in the barangay level since the early 1980’s. The **Internal Revenue Allotment** of the national government (IRA) would oftentimes go to the settlement of family feuds. A group of local elders would be constituted together with the barangay captain to form a committee and act as mediators according to the Muslim tradition of “**pag-sulot**” (settlement). At times the fighting would cease after payment of the ‘**blood money**’ (damage for the aggrieved party). In cases where the offended party does not find the decision agreeable the fight continues. Barangay Asturias where Hussein resides is a favorite battleground for the conflicts even at present. The local residents, he describes have developed a tolerance for such kind of volatile atmosphere that it is not uncommon to see fox holes constructed beneath their homes.

*“Way na pag-dialogue bang miya-masoh na in uwoh sin mga tao diih. Hangkan da isab tahun-tahun na-ubos sadja in IRA sin parenta ha pag-sulot. Way na siin naka-piin ha pag-improve sin da-ira Jolo pu-as bunoh. Awon ison-ison ka-rungugan natoh ha ka-ibanan manusya in IRA kunoh yan da ha lima sin nakurah, sawab in conciliation program ini way na*

*pag-audit...*” [Dialogue is oftentimes forgotten when everyone seems to be heated up to do battle. It is not therefore surprising that the annual IRA (Internal Revenue Allotment) for the reconstruction of Sulu is easily depleted yearly. There are even rumors that a portion of the IRA goes to the pockets of the government officials since auditing is not strictly done here...], remarked Hussein.

Social transformation as presently advocated by the Catholic Church through the NDJC is what Jihad-al-Akhbar also promotes, explained Hussein. “*In pag-pinda sin barran nato iban sin kahawman subay yan ha lawum atay sin manusya. Ini pag-tawagun ‘jihad’ ha Islam bukon in pag-bubunoh na sadja misan way dapat...*” [The need to change ourselves and the community should come from the heart. This is what ‘jihad’ advocates in Islam and not the waging of causeless battles...], concluded Hussein.

## Narratives of Key Actors

### Fight or Perish

*Magsabil bang Matay rah*

(The story of a Muslim warrior)

*“Pito bulan kami nag-anad iban mga Maoists ha Maimbung. Nagsa-sapa kami ha Qur’an iban sin mga nakurah. Bang way patut di makawa sin mga sundalo in Bangsamoro...di mapatay in kamusliman...mag-sabil kita...”* [We underwent training for seven months in Maimbung municipality. We made a vow before the Qur’an together with our leaders...The Bangsamoro will never be conquered by the military. The Muslims will never yield. We will fight or perish...], confides Bapa Hajirul.

That was thirty years ago and at 76, Bapa Hajirul recounts the war as the biggest he fought ever since the legendary battle of hadji Kamlon in the 1950s. In Sulu, Maimbung is widely known to be the stronghold of the MNLF and the Bangsa Moro Army, its military arm (known then as the Maoists). Bapa Hajirul believes that the 1974 war was unavoidable. He joined the Maoists force just like the rest of his Muslim brothers because of the belief that Muslims were being “salvaged” (liquidated). Earlier there were already reports from the tao gimba (upland folks) of the harassments they were subjected to by the AFP.

The two sons of Bapa Hajirul were among the casualties in a military raid in Parang municipality in the 70s. This was about the same time when the Christian Ilaga and the Muslim

Barracuda were agitating Cotabato and some parts of Lanao with pocket wars recalls Bapa Hajirul. “Bukon mangii in umatoh bang kita na in patayon. Bukon kita in namunoh kita in biyunoh...” [It was not wrong to defend oneself. It was not a war of aggression we were pushed to fight back...], explains Bapa Hajirul. The colonial wars according to Bapa Hajirul were altogether a different story as oral tradition would say. Their forefathers, he claims knew they were fighting foreign invaders against exploitation and evangelization. This time, he adds the burden of wrestling with his own people made the circumstances more tragic. For some reasons, he comments the military would like to banish the Muslims. “Malu-gay ako nagpanday ha simbahan sin mga Christians ha Notre Dame tagna. Masul ipatawag sadja ako bang awon ipa-repair in mga pari...Mata-ud in kaki-lahan ko kanila...” [I have worked as a carpenter for a while at the Notre Dame chapel. The priests would send for me to repair some furniture. I know a lot of them..], narrates Bapa Hajirul. He even mentioned one priests would go out of his way to bring him food whenever there is an occasion to celebrate in the church. “Marayaw sukod nakapag-usaha ako pag-panday ha mga pari iban sin pag-uma koh. Hangpu katan in anak koh.. Wakto pag-buno way na ako nakapag-uma sawab sin lingug. Masakit in kiya-lawa-an ako hinang sah di hika-sipat in sakit sin atay koh wakto kiya-lawa-an ako mga anak ha military operation ha Patikul...” [I was lucky I was able to make a living out of the carpentry work I had with the priests and my farming. I was able to feed my ten

children. But during the upheaval I stopped farming. The loss of income pained me. But the grief that consumed me was even more intense when I lost my sons in the military operation in Patikul...], he relates. It was beyond Bapa Hajirul to comprehend the cruelty behind the killing

of his two sons. When he joined the movement (MNLF), he made a vow not only as a vengeance for his loss but as an outright protest against oppression against all Muslims, he claims.

On February 7 of 1974 at the dawn of their attack he was at the rear end of the fighting troop (MNLF). The government military was taken by surprise since no rifles were initially fired by the Maoists. They fought using the 'kalis' (Muslim bladed weapon) and bare hands. Soon, he narrates he was lost in physical combat with the opponents. The terror that ensued in the cataclysms of the fight validated his fears. The military he maintains did their best to exterminate the rebels at the expense of the civilians. Bombardment from the navy and war planes continued incessantly for several days. The **big fire** broke on the third day while he was trying to rescue a family trapped inside their home. By stroke of luck the folks were able to cross the road before he tripped on a land mine that partly exploded. One of his eyes was hit by a splinter. Bapa Hajirul lost count of the number of soldiers he injured with his bare hands. "Way na ako naka-nanam sakit atawa buga. In ha pikilan koh subay hinangon ko na sadja in piyag-sapahan koh..." [I did not feel pain or fear anymore. I just had to do what I set out to do...]. It was a miracle when he was spared.

Bapa Hajirul surrendered shortly after the rebels were given amnesty and immunity from criminal prosecution by the Marcos administration. But instead of enjoying the incentive of joining the AFP like other rebel integrees he opted to return to the upland.

"Mata-ud ha mga MNLF in miya-gad ha parenta nasilaw ha alta iban kasañang. Yan in Magic Eight sampay biha-on sila-sila na in nag-bubunoh. Nalawa na in piyag-sapahan..." [Many among the MNLF were enticed by the government with wealth and power. The Magic Eight for instance are fighting until now among themselves. They have forgotten the vow they

made...], Jikirani confessed. The condition in the mountains he claims has not improved. He simply wanted some space for himself. Sulu according to Bapa Hajirul has not healed following its destruction in 1974. Not even with the establishment of the ARMM after the Tripoli Agreement. He maintains that at present, what the Joloanos need are good Muslim leaders who would not renege on their responsibility of protecting their own people and their homeland- the Bangsamoro even if it means waging another battle...

## Appendix C2

### **In Answer to the Call of Duty**

(The story of a Christian Soldier)

Belatedly he realized that the idea was to turn Jolo into a *“little Vietnam”* with the military experimenting on fragmentation bombs...resource control...search and destroy missions...secret armies...stockade for tortures. Since the MNLF was concentrated in Sulu, the province suffered a fatal blow...”, confides ex-Sergeant Sarmiento.

Serge as he is known to some Joloanos believes that during the 1974 military operation in Sulu, they were simply *“following orders”*. The soldiers according to Searge made a vow to uphold the integrity and secure the sovereignty of the Philippines. Even before the Jabidah Massacre in 1968 he recalls, there was already a widespread manifestation of *“militancy”* among the Muslims not only in Jolo but throughout the country. And this

militancy he declares was partly attributed to the universal shifts in consciousness among Muslims because of *Islamic revivalism*.

“Na-assign ako ha Jolo sin mid-1960s... Napansin ko na in pag-ta-ud sin Muslim Muslim foreign missionaries at local scholars tinatawag na “tablig” sa mga prayer meetings sa mosques at kaddai (coffe shops) in Jolo. Sabi nila galling daw ha Egypt iban Saudi .Hindi nag-tagal nag-karo-on na ng pag-babago and relasyon ng mga Christians at Muslims dito. [I was assigned in Jolo in mid-1960s. I immediately noticed the increasing number of Muslim foreign missionaries and local scholars they call “tablig” (preachers of the Islamic faith) in prayer meetings, inside the mosques and the “kaddai” (coffe shops) in Jolo. They say these preachers came from Egypt and Saudi. The relations of the Christians and Muslims eventually changed.], narrates Searge.

The hostile atmosphere persisted and worsened in the 70s recalls Searge. In some parts of Mindanao like Cotabato and Lanao he claims, blatant killings were allegedly undertaken by a group called “*Ilaga*”. They were believed to be ex-military Christians who were former members of the HUKBALAHAP Movement in Luzon at the height of the land grabbing incidents. A number settled in Mindanao and organized themselves as a para-military force against the alleged indiscriminate acts of the Muslims. At the same time wealthy Muslims were reported to have established private armies notorious for burning down Christian farms and assassinating military troops. They were known as the *Barracuda* and the *Blackshirts*. These incidents created a complete picture of disturbance in Mindanao that prompted Marcos to declare Martial Law in 1972.

The 1974 siege in Sulu was the climax noted Searge. “*Private army pa ako noon in charge sa supply. Nasa field ako sin pag-bunoh. Nakita ko talaga kung paano tina-maan kahit*



*na sinong civilians nasa firing range sikatuna, air raids pati naval bombardment. Nagka-sala din kami sa ibang civilians lalo na Muslims dahil hindi kami nag-release ng medicines. Meron order na i-control and pag-bigay ng gamut dahil baka gamitin lang ng mga rebelde. Mahigpit ang pag-palabas namin ng gamot at pagkain..”* [I was a private army then in charge of the supply. I was in the field when the war broke. Because it was an all-out war anybody became targets of the *sikatuna* (amphibian tank) within its firing range, air raids and naval bombardment... Somehow we became privy to the sufferings of the civilians especially the Muslims because at one point in time we did not release medicines. There were strict orders to control the

release because they might be used by the rebel-enemies.... This was strategic resource control to weaken the opponents...], recalls Searge. True, admitted Searge the damage to human lives and property was beyond accounting. A number of civilians especially the Muslims were subjected to torture in military stockades for looking exactly like a rebel- with the ***long-haired untidy look***.

Anytime of the day houses were ransacked for hidden persons or weapons without warrants. He sometimes assisted in the “*search and destroy order*”. There was no clear delineation of duties among the soldiers. His comrades were in a state of paranoia arresting anyone that took their fancy. “*Totoo maraming Muslim suspects ang na-missing. Ang ilan sa mga kasamahan naming sa Air Force mag-story sa amin ng operation nila sa bundok panahon ng 1974 war.... Ipag-hulog daw nila galing sa helicopter ang ibang suspects mahuli nila doon kaya hindi na makita...*” [It’s true a lot of Muslims were declared missing. A few of my friends from the Air Force related their gruesome operation in the upland.... Some Muslim suspects

they arrested in the mountains were thrown from the helicopter not to be seen again...], revealed Searge. The killing fever he recounted was intensely contagious that time. Most of the military were trained to kill. They were like killing machines, he added.

Searge feels that the Muslim rebels had their fair share in the destruction that took place. *“Gumamit din ang mga rebelde ng high-powered weapons. Ang support sabi ng reports galling sa Malaysia at Libya. Sila ang nag-lagay ng mga land mines around the town of Jolo Hinulugan nila ng mortar ang Philippine Constabulary Camp sa third day ng giyera. Nasira ang Sulu Provincial Hospital at ang Water District...Marami ang casualties.”*[The rebels were also using high-powered ammunitions. Reports say the support came from Malaysia and Libya. They planted a number of land mines around the town of Jolo. The mortar that exploded in the Philippine Constabulary camp on the third day came from them. It destroyed the Sulu Provincial Hospital and the Water District... The number of casualties was great...], claims Searge.

The Marcos administration failed to keep the tragedy a secret. After a week-long nightmare war victims came out into the open. The news black out and the cancellation of all means of transportation was part of the military strategy. Notwithstanding vigilance on the part of the military after the siege, like a lull before the storm the unexpected happened. On February 1981 during the Pope's visit to the Philippines, the MNLF ambushed hundreds of PC troops in Pata island. This happened after Marcos officially declared that the members of the MNLF were liquidated following the war in Sulu. Searge believes that the tug-of-war between the military and the rebels can go on indefinitely wherein each one tries to outsmart the other. Apparently, he thinks no one comes out the winner.

*“Wala ako masyadong alam sa ASG (Abu Sayaf Group). Ma-arang mga tulisan lang sila. Sabi naman ng iba infiltrated daw ng military. Hindi ako sigurado dahil wala na ako sa service ng panahon ng 1990s. [I know little of the ASG Abu Sayaf Group. They say the group is a bunch of bandits. There are also talks that they are infiltrated by the military. I cannot be certain, I was no longer in service in the 1990s when they came into the picture...],* clarifies Searge. He chose to stay in Jolo after his early retirement and married a Zamboangueña.

Today, Searge observes the air of suspicion lingers between the Muslims and Christians especially following the kidnapping incidents. **Those who prospered in the area were mostly members of the Magic Eight (ex-rebels) and their private armies because of the wealth they accumulated during Martial Law.** Pocket wars continue between the military and the rebels and among these wealthy clans. Peace therefore is long time coming according to Searge. *Because after Jolo was turned into a **little Vietnam**, it continues to bleed. And there is no telling when the next fatal encounter will hit the battleground again...*

## **A Vision of Peace**

(The story of a Priest)

*“The series of conflicts in Sulu may have generally rendered the Joloanos unforgiving. But I envision a better chance of peace from the younger people....”*, revealed father Roy.

In Jolo, the church has always been a monument of peace and conciliation for the people from all walks of life, narrates father. Through its ministry it has endeavored to awaken not only the minds but the hearts of the people. The Notre Dame of Jolo College (NDJC) and the Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI) a missionary order of which father belongs has been through good and bad times. “We have shared in the people’s revelry and commiserated in their sorrows...”, father reveals. The Joloanos’ particularly the Muslims’ relationship with the church is reflective of the vacillating climate of violence and uncertainty that has prevailed in the community.

*“When I came to be assigned here in the 60s I have learned to appreciate the “adapt” (norms) of the people within a short span of time. I thought it was the greatest evangelical mission I have accomplished. I became deeply embued in the beauty of diversity..”*, father recounts. He acculturated himself with the tradition and eventually felt one with the people. *“We would hear mass in the remote municipalities of Parang, Patikul and Maimbung upon invitation of the soldiers stationed there and come back to downtown Jolo with baskets of fruits and farm products given by my Muslim friends from the gimba (upland)”*, father narrates.

*“Oftentimes, religious processions and seasonal activities initiated by the church at the Public plaza and around the town were celebrated with relish involving both Muslims and Christians. The month of Ramaddan which for the Muslims is a sacrosanct occasion likewise enjoined the Christian community in its celebration. The culmination of the “fasting” period was usually celebrated with a festive mood and cultural presentations”,* father added.

Jolo during those days was a busy center of trade and commerce. The barter exchange with its neighbors like Sabah Malaysia, Borneo and Indonesia has contributed much to its growing economy. *“Mag-punta ka sa pantalan at makikita mo and kalse-klaseng produkto na galling sa labas. Karamihan textiles at cigarettes. Hindi mahigpit ang gobyerno noon sa sumgling kaya labas pasok and commodities through “back door”, yan ang tawag nila..Later na lang na-legalized ang barter trade system...”* [At the wharf you will see variety of imported products sold. The government was not yet very strict about smuggling that time and a lot of commodities got in through the *“back door”*. That is what they call it. It was only later that the barter trade system was legalized...], explains father. Father thinks that the idea of *smuggling* among them

town of Jolo burned down because the fire trucks they used were filled with gasoline instead of water... The gory fighting continued for at least five days...And I said to myself, God must have forsaken us...], father recalls. There was no clear ideology being fought for on both sides, claims father. To him, it appeared more like a display of arrogance on the part of the government military and misplaced allegiance on the part of the Muslim fighters.

To this date, father observes animosity is deeply hidden among some Muslims and Christians. Seldom does anyone freely talk about their feelings towards the other, but the

stereotypes would often surface in their conversations. Father believes however that the good news is that “*mixed marriages*” have somehow tempered the “psychological divide” that hampers a meaningful understanding between the two cultures. Many Christian soldiers, father comments have embraced Islam by choice or by marriage after the war. There were also rare cases of some Muslims becoming Christian converts.

*“The fact that the Joloano Muslims and Christians may not be completely comfortable with the way things are between them does not mean that they don’t want peace”*, father remarks. *“They just don’t know how to go about it...”*, he adds. Thus the Tripoli Agreement and the establishment of the ARMM according to father was a breakthrough that brought hope for recovery. The church for its part has doubled its efforts through its vicariate ministry of social transformation. Presently the NDJC through its peace center has actively involved all sectors especially the youth in *peace advocacy*.

*“We address not only the minds but the hearts... because how can we have peace if we do not know in our hearts what it means to have peace?”*, father reasons. Father believes that the youths are unburdened by the past and can therefore take whatever is happening with a “grain of salt”. *“The younger people have the openness that allows their hearts to ‘dialogue’ with courage and sincerity. Real conciliation can grow and thrive with them...”*, father concludes.

## The True Jihad

(The story of a Grand Mufti)

“*In ka-Musliman di mag-jihad bang way dapat...*” [The Muslims would not wage a religious war without a cause...], Ustadz Sali declares. Nowhere in the Qur’an is the word “**jihad**” used to mean a *war of aggression*. The appropriate word in Arabic is “**quital**” with reference to war. There are however some Muslim “mujahideens” (those who exert themselves for the sake of God) who equate “God is great” with “war is great” thus, the misconception that a “jihad” can be waged anytime.

“Jihad” essentially means “a struggle within”, Ustadz clarifies. “It is a positive and continuous process at work in the entire life of a ‘mujahid’ (believer)” wherein he exerts himself to the utmost to adhere to the will of Allah (swt)...”, Ustadz continues. “In Qur’an nag-i-yan ha mga Muslims subay likayan in baya ha mga kasañang iban alta asal di natoh maraah ha hansipak dunya..In jihad ini in pag-tawagon “jihad-e-nafs” ...” [The Qur’an exhorts the ‘mujahid’ to exercise patience and to curb his material indulgence...to detach himself from worldly affairs involving wealth and power he cannot bring over to the spiritual world. This is what we call ‘jihad-e-nafs’...], he adds. The greatest jihad believes Ustadz is done through a “peaceful” means known as “dawah”. A “tablig” (preacher of the Islamic faith) he comments, is engaged in a “jihad dawah” as he emulates the “sunnah” (the way of the Prophet Muhammad) in spreading the teachings of Islam. Any believer for that matter Ustadz stresses, may follow such example by striving hard to reach this ideological plane.

The position of “peace” in Islam Ustadz claims is central. Only in an extreme case when it cannot be avoided that war is allowed. And this can be undertaken only with the explicit approval of the “Ummah” (Muslim community). Otherwise a collective fight that takes place for some other reason may be political rather than religious within the context of the Islamic precepts. One indicator of a “true jihad” is when a “defensive” war is undertaken against direct oppressors of the believer’s right to exercise his faith. Ustadz agrees that there were a number of serious reasons why most Muslims became involved in the 1974 uprising. But these reasons accordingly were in essence more ‘valid’ in terms of personal or political matters than religious ones. The battle that was fought in Jolo in 1974, he maintains was never a religious matter. “Bukon jihad in pag-bunoh sin wakto 1974...” [The war that was fought in 1974 was not a jihad...], claims Ustadz. “Mata-ud in miyatay ha taimanghud natoh, kiya-sakitan atawa kiya-la-waan alta. Nahilo in दौरa wakto pag-bunoh. Sah misan biya-di-in way rah natandug in agama Islam...” [A lot of Muslims died in the siege. They suffered terrible material and moral loss. Our world was practically upside down during the mutiny. Yet somehow Islam continued to thrive among the people. There was no deprivation of the freedom to exercise the faith even while the war continues. This right was never sequestered from the Muslims..], explains Ustadz. However from a political standpoint, Ustadz believes that the MNLF’s declaration of the war in 1974 was representative of the will of the people being a political entity recognized by the OIC (Organization of Islamic Conferences) and by the government. Thus, the waging of the 1974 war along this political premise was perhaps more plausible rather than on a religious basis. Admittedly, Ustadz remarks the mutiny appeared to be ethno-religious because of the growing tensions that time in other parts of Mindanao especially in Cotabato and Lanao involving pocket wars between the “Ilaga” and the



“Baracuda”. The burning of Christian rice and sugar plantations and the bombings of mosques had agitated Muslims and Christians alike.

Ustadz admits, the relationship between the Muslims and Christians in the province has continued to be described as *lukewarm*. There were intermittent periods of peace but they were short-lived. The willingness to accommodate one another observes Ustadz is there but is often thwarted by forces too strong for both sides to resist. These forces, continues Ustadz would include historical biases they have of each other and the rest are politically motivated. “Bunna marayaw in pag-agad sin Muslim iban Christian ha daira timpo puas bunoh Milikan pag-tawagon ‘New Philippine Republic’. Wakto ini way pa kiya-si-sigpitan in manusia ha pag-kaun, ha pag-usaha ha lawud iban ha gimba. Dimayaw in kahawman pasalan sin pag-yanon “infrastructure” biya sin ilaw, tubig, daan iban ka-iskulan. Yan na piya-hinang in Sulu Provincial Capitol ha 1968. Sambat pa nila nag-tabang-tabang in kataan ha pag-parayaw sin daira Jolo...” [It is true that the Muslims and Christians co-existed harmoniously towards the end of the American Occupation and the New Philippine Republican era. There was abundance of food and livelihood that time. The town of Jolo and the entire province of Sulu underwent major improvements with electrification, water system, roads and school buildings. The Sulu Provincial Capitol was constructed in 1968. Everyone was instrumental in the development of the province...], narrates Ustadz. The 1974 war has changed all these. As a **Grand Mufti** or a chosen religious leader in the region Ustadz Sali feels he understands well the sentiments of the Muslim folks.

The tensions that built-up shortly before the war created a hostile atmosphere that gave the mutiny a religious dimension. “In kata-uran ha mga military ma-nag-gaw mga taimanghud nato misan way sala. Pila-pila Muslim mana-nagat iban mag-u-uma kiya-lawan-an usah iban

lupa pasalan sin lingog ha gimba in Christian sundalo kunoh in pasalan. Ini in ha lawum pikilan sin kata-uran manusia limamud ha pag-bunoh...”[The Christian soldiers were blamed for the arrest and disappearance of some Muslim suspects who were innocent. A number of Muslim fishermen and farmers were deprived of livelihood as well as their lands because of the disturbances caused by the Christian military troops in the upland...], recalls Ustadz.

Apparently the series of events led a number of Muslims to believe that they were persecuted because of their faith. And the concept of ‘jihad’ had been confused with a political struggle. To some extent, explain Ustadz it is difficult to draw a line between what constitutes religious and what is political because “Islam is all-embracing”, explains Ustadz. Nevertheless it is imperative among all Muslims to “*avoid conflict*” at all cost. “Yan ha sunnah sin Nabi Mohammad in pag-iyanon Bukhari...” It is provided in the teachings of the Prophet Mohammad the virtue of avoiding conflict or “**Bukhari**”, explains Ustadz. One example of avoidance initiated by the Prophet was during the “*Battle of the Trench*” wherein the Prophet and his companions dug a long trench underground to evade confrontation with the opponents. The desire for peace therefore, Ustadz Sali believes should come from within. And the greatest struggle for peace is only possible if both the Muslims and the Christians open their hearts for conciliation and practice “*jihad*” in the truest sense.